UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA.

CASTING ASIDE COLONIAL OCCUPATION:

British Imperial History and Feminist (Re)visions in *Cloud Nine* and *Our Country's Good.*

APOLLO OBONYO AMOKO.

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts.

Department of Drama.

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P. O. BOX 55569,
NAIROBI, KENYA.

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The undersigned certify that they have read and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled *Casting Aside Colonial Occupation: British Imperial History and Feminist (Re)visions in Cloud Nine and Our Country's Good* submitted by Apollo Obonyo Amoko in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Dr. Deborah A. Thompson, supervisor.

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ABSTRACT:

My thesis explores the production and critical reception of two contemporary feminist plays, Caryl Churchill's *Cloud Nine* and Timberlake Wertenbaker's *Our Country's Good*. In their various ways, both plays appropriate and attempt to revise British colonial history. I examine how these appropriations are at once subversive and reactionary. I am interested in the ways in which discourses of gender and sexuality on the one hand, and discourses of race and post-coloniality on the other, intersect and appear to undermine each other in these two plays. I am also concerned with the ways in which these purportedly feminist creative—and critical—projects, constructed from unacknowledged racial and colonial privilege, have offered certain oppressed gender and sexual identities the prospect of empowering representation, and simultaneously consigned oppressed racial and colonial identities to further subjection and invisibility. In this regard, I attempt to trace the implication of Western feminist thought and practice in the contemporary exercise of global power. I am interested in the parallels between contemporary processes of knowledge production and circulation that are buttressed by a system of global capitalism dominated by the West, and the historical processes of knowledge production and circulation that were buttressed by European colonial expansion. My study also attempts to trace the ambivalent and contradictory results of the contestation of oppressive power in both plays to the illusion of mutual exclusiveness between colonial institutions and phallocratic/heterosexist institutions as dramatized by the two playwrights and reproduced by their critics.

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INTRODUCTION:

RE-STAGING BRITISH IMPERIALISM: WESTERN FEMINIST PRACTICE AND THE DISCOURSES OF COLONIALISM:

> .... [C]olonialism has long served as a metaphor for a wide range of dominations, collapsing the specific hierarchies of time and place into a seamless whole. In this scenario, "to colonize" is an evocative and active verb accounting for a range of inequities and exclusions—that may have little to do with colonialism at all. As a morality tale of the present the metaphor of colonialism has enormous force but it can also eclipse how varied the subjects are created by different colonialisms.[1]

This thesis undertakes a post-colonial re-reading of two play-texts, Caryl Churchill's *Cloud Nine* and Timberlake Wertenbaker's *Our Country's Good*, that have in recent years been celebrated and valorized in Western feminist critical and creative practice. My attempt at a post-colonial re-reading of these two plays is motivated by the fact both playwrights re-enact and revise British colonial history as the metaphorical site for their respective feminist projects. While a substantial part of *Cloud Nine* is set in colonial Africa, *Our Country's Good* is set almost exclusively in colonial Australia. What does it mean that the reconstruction of the ideal feminist subject in contemporary Britain appears to rely on revisions of English colonial history? I will suggest that creative revisions of history represent attempts to render perceived crises in the present intelligible by imaginatively re-configuring the past. Such revisions are therefore the inevitable sites of multiple displacements and slippages. I will attempt to trace the displacements and slippages that occur in both *Our Country's Good* and *Cloud Nine* from the standpoint of race and colonialism.

My study is situated in the relational and contestatory frontier between the racialized processes of Western self-presentation (both historical and metaphorical) and the processes of Western re-presentation of racialized "others"; between discourses of gender and sexuality and discourses of race and colonialism; and between the possible disruption of (white) female objectification and the possible recuperation of colonial objectification. My study is also situated in the relational and contestatory frontier between Western creative and critical practices where colonial history is re-enacted as a metaphor of sameness, on the one hand and lived global realities where colonial history has inscribed marked inequalities and exclusions, on the other.

The origins of this thesis are at one level fortuitous. I first encountered the two texts under review nearly two years ago at the outset of my graduate education. *Cloud Nine* was one of the texts I studied in a graduate seminar on issues of gender and sexuality in performance. At the same time as I was attending this course I participated, quite by chance, in a production of *Our Country's Good*. I had no knowledge then just how much the two apparently unrelated projects (the one a productive academic exercise, the other a difficult extracurricular pursuit) had in common. Nor did I know that these two texts would over the next two years come to constitute a particularly troublesome and intractable point in the process of my personal and academic definition.

This thesis therefore discloses, beyond coincidence and chance, heavy personal investments, interests, and anxieties. My study of these two plays has clarified but not resolved many of the conflicts and contradictions in my personal impulses as a student of race and colonialism, and gender and sexuality, and as a black African living and studying in the West. How do I reconcile, for example, the empowering contestation of various normative gender and sexual subjectivities that have been authorized in my reading of *Cloud Nine* with the effaced but exclusionary whiteness that the play seems concurrently to reproduce? How do I reconcile the affirmation of the social value of the theatre that certain readings of *Our Country's Good* seem to

recognize with the play's apparently uncritical reproduction of the discourses of colonialism? This thesis is opened up and held together by these unresolved conflicts and contradictions.

This thesis is, in general terms, a direct result of my experience of living in a Western nation and, in specific terms, of my studying in a department that, despite admitting me and several more racial and/or colonial "others" into its academic programmes, has failed to sufficiently confront its own implication in discourses of privilege and racialized exclusion. It represents my attempt to interrupt and engage with the institutions and discourses that continue to concurrently sustain and efface a white episteme in the production and normalization of dramatic knowledge as I have received it. This study, to adopt the thoughts of Homi K. Bhabha, owes something to my experience of migration. Bhabha writes:

> I have lived that moment of the scattering of people that in other times and other places, in the nations of others, becomes a time of gathering. Gatherings of exiles and émigrés and refugees, gathering on the edge of 'foreign' cultures; gatherings at frontiers; gatherings in the ghettos or cafés of city centres; gathering in the half-life, half-light of foreign tongues, or in the uncanny fluency of another's language; gathering the signs of approval and acceptance, degrees, discourses, disciplines; gathering the memories of underdevelopment, of other worlds lived retroactively; gathering the past in a ritual of revival; gathering the present. Also gathering of the people in the diaspora: indentured, migrant, interned; the gathering of incriminating statistics, educational performance, legal statuses, immigration statuses—the genealogy of that lonely figure that John Berger has named the seventh man.[2]

I have shared something of Bhabha's experience, an experience that affects my study in profound (but also ambiguous and contradictory) ways.

But I do not wish to impart on the condition of my voluntary migration to the West a self-serving epistemic privilege or to locate my study within an equally self-serving condition of "exile" or "trauma." In his book *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures*, Aijaz Ahmad challenges the valorization and fetishization of the "trauma of exile" as a discursive site, in preference to the peripherized and deprived post-colonial margin, for the most productive generation of counter-hegemonic discourses.[3] Ahmad asserts that "exile"—both as a metaphor and as an appropriated descriptive label—has acquired currency in Western academic discourses and specifically in metropolitan universities by legitimizing the marginalization of the processes of cultural production in post-colonial nations and by eliding critical distinctions within migrant communities in the West, particularly distinctions of class, education, and specific individual circumstances. He argues:

> Immigration, in other words, has had its own contradictions: many have been propelled by need, others motivated by ambition, yet others driven away by persecution; for some there is really no longer a home to return to; in many cases need and ambition have become ambiguously and inextricably linked. No firm generalizations can be offered for so large and complex a phenomenon, involving so many individual biographies. Nor is a uniform political choice necessarily immanent in the act of immigration as such.[4]

Ahmad points to the ways in which "exile," as a discursive formation, has ensured for the small proportion of non-Western intellectuals (including graduate students) located in the West recognition within the circuits of knowledge production buttressed by global capitalism:

> Out of these reorganizations of capital, communications and personnel has come the image of 'theorist' as 'traveller', and of literary production itself as a ruse of immigration, of travelling *lightly*....The fact that some of these intellectuals were political exiles has been taken advantage of, in an incredibly inflationary

> rhetoric, to deploy 'exile', first as a metaphor and then as a fully appropriated descriptive label for the essential condition of immigration as such; the upper class Indian who *chooses* to live in the metropolitan country is then called the 'diasporic Indian', 'exile' itself becomes a condition of the soul, unrelated to the facts of material life.[5]

The objections Ahmad presents against the valorization in academic discourse of voluntary migration by non-Western intellectuals to the West include and implicate my study within the Western practices of writing and reading that it is purporting to interrupt and critique. My study comes out of and in turn reinforces the circuits of knowledge production in the West buttressed by global capitalism. As a voluntary migrant to the West, I write from a position marked by deep ambivalences and ambiguities.

The ambivalence of my personal position is related to and in many ways is compounded by on-going debates regarding methodology in both feminist and post-colonial studies. At the heart of these critical debates are intractable issues of positionality and affinity. Two apparently antithetical approaches, the one generalist, the other particularist, seem to underpin both post-colonial and feminist studies. A generalist conception of post-colonial scholarship is predicated on the notion that the conquest and occupation of the non-European world by various European powers (England, Spain, Portugal, France etc.) was broadly similar across vastly different historical, geographical and cultural contexts. Under the generalist conception of colonialism, historically and geographically specific instances of colonial encounter (such as the example of British colonial occupation in Africa broached in *Cloud Nine* or the example of English settlement in Australia reproduced in *Our Country's Good*) are thought to present examples that confirm a predetermined set of general principles. A generalist conceptualization of colonialism does not erase differences between specific colonialisms as such but sees them as subsumed by an organizing general principle.

The Empire Writes Back, a book that attempts to codify a general theory for literary production throughout the post-colonial world, is an example of a generalist conception of colonialism.[6] Written in 1989, this book was in part an attempt to resist the collapsing of the category "post-colonial" into the category "Third World"—a tempting but flawed conflation. Bill Aschroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin attempt to introduce a general theory for the analysis of *all* post-colonial literatures based on the claim that *all* such writing is overdetermined by the legacy of colonial encounter:

> ....We use the term post-colonial, however, to cover *all* the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day. *This is because there is a continuity of preoccupations throughout the historical process initiated by European imperial aggression.* We also suggest that it is most appropriate as the term for the new *cross-cultural criticism* which has emerged in recent years and for the discourse through which this is constituted. In this sense this book is concerned with the world as it exists during and after the period of European imperial domination and the effects of this on contemporary literatures.[7]

Elaborating what such a general theory entails—such concepts as "hegemony," "language," and "place and displacement"—they proceed to cite examples from around the post-colonial world, across vast historical, geographical and cultural contexts—African countries, Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Caribbean countries, India, Malaysia, Malta, New Zealand, Pakistan, Singapore, South Pacific countries and Sri Lanka—to support a set of predetermined general premises. In their formulation, literary production in the U.S.A is not just "post-colonial" but, in its relationship with the "metropolitan centre," is "*paradigmatic for post-colonial literatures everywhere*."[8]

A generalist conception of feminist theory is similarly predicated on the belief that there is a universal, cross-cultural and transhistorical patriarchal framework that feminist thought and practice attempts to disclose and resist. It posits a universal sisterhood among women as the material subjects of vastly different historical, cultural and geographical conjunctures. In its earliest formulations, Western feminist thought and practice was dominated by a generalist view of patriarchy.

Generalist formulations encounter difficulty in trying to account for the contestatory and contradictory interrelations within and between particular forms of patriarchy and particular instances of colonialism. A generalist conception of colonialism (which gives undifferentiated priority to colonial encounter in all social analysis) and a generalist conception of patriarchy (which gives undifferentiated primacy to sexual difference in all social analysis) are, ideally, mutually exclusive. A universalist impulse in the contemplation of patriarchy cannot, to my mind, accommodate the irreducible differences imposed on women by colonialism. Women in "colonizing contexts," for example, cannot theorize from the same site as women in "colonized contexts." Similarly, a generalist impulse in contemplating colonial encounter as the binary opposition between European powers and the non-European world cannot, it seems, account for the existence of certain forms of male privilege across colonial divisions.

In contrast to generalist theoretical formulations, particularist conceptions of post-coloniality do not presume that several centuries of colonial encounters around the world are sufficiently similar to warrant a pre-determined general theory. Similarly, particularist conceptions of feminist theory do not presume the existence of a universal, cross-cultural and transhistorical patriarchal framework. Rejecting notions of universal and transhistorical structures of oppression even when the sets of circumstances under review seem broadly similar, particularist theories insist that all analysis be grounded on the material and cultural conditions within specific and limited geographical, cultural and historical contexts. In their radical forms

particularist arguments question the validity of "patriarchy" and "colonialism" as (generalized) analytical concepts and recognize these terms as at best "purely descriptive categories." In their quest for specificity and materiality extreme particularist approaches to both feminist and post-colonial practice ultimately threaten the possibility for cross-cultural study of any sort. However, in their nuanced formulations, particularist approaches to post-colonial and feminist studies do not disallow generalizations as such but posit that any generalizations cannot be presumed ahead of time and can only be the result of detailed studies of separable and specific material conditions. Such nuanced particularist approaches to both feminist and post-colonial studies enable contextual and specific examinations of the concurrently contradictory and complementary relationship between particular examples of patriarchy and specific instances of colonialism. For this reason a particularist approach is adopted in this study, which investigates the apparent rupture between the discourses of race and colonialism and the discourses of gender and sexuality in the production as well as in the critical reception of two contemporary Western feminist texts. Nevertheless, I will maintain throughout this study, that notwithstanding the radical differences between particular forms of colonialism, varied colonial encounters retain certain similarities, namely the dispossession and displacement of indigenous communities by invading foreigners. I contend that these similarities authorize the posing of what I will nominate as "the ultimate colonial question": by what right is land being taken away from those who own it. This question—and its multiple answers—is central to the analysis I undertake in this study.

In "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses," Chandra Talpade Mohanty offers a particularist model for the study of the relationship between specific forms of patriarchy and specific forms of colonialism.[9] Mohanty addresses the production of the "third world woman" in Western feminist scholarship and traces the ways in which certain Western feminist analytical practices may be implicated in the reproduction of the discourses of colonialism. She is concerned that the urgent political necessity for feminists to form strategic

coalitions across class, race, and national boundaries may result in a form of neocolonialism as priority is given to feminist interests as they have been articulated in the U. S. A. and Western Europe at the expense of those of the non-Western world. She argues that:

> assumptions of privilege and ethnocentric universality on the one hand, and inadequate self-consciousness about the effect of western scholarship on the "third world" in the context of a world system dominated by the west on the other, characterize a sizable extent of western feminist work on women in the third world. An analysis of "sexual difference" in the form of a cross-culturally singular and monolithic notion of patriarchy or male domination leads to a construction of a similarly reductive and homogenous notion of what I call "third world difference"—that stable ahistorical something that oppresses most if not all women in those countries. And it is in the production of this "third world difference" that western feminists appropriate and "colonize" the fundamental complexities and conflicts which characterize the lives of women of different classes, religions, cultures, races, and castes in these countries. It is in this process of homogenization and systematization of oppression of the women of the third world that power is exercised in much of recent western feminist discourse and this power needs to be defined and named.[10]

My reading of the production and critical reception of both *Cloud Nine* and *Our Country's Good* suggests that some of the concerns raised by Mohanty are at play even though the situations I am analyzing are not identical to hers. Both playwrights seem to re-enact singular monolithic notions of patriarchy. Both playwrights as well as their critics seem unaware of the effect of Western creative and critical practices on the non-Western world even though the two plays are set across the frontiers of colonial history. As a result both plays re-enact an analysis of sexual difference based on an exclusionary, if anxiously effaced, whiteness. African women in *Cloud*

Nine and Aboriginal women in *Our Country's Good* are consigned to invisibility. My intervention does not seek to inscribe a singular homogeneous notion of "third world difference" into readings of the two plays. Instead, I will attempt to trace the implications of specific Western feminist practices in the discourses of colonialism and the erasure of non-Western women.

The processes of discursive colonization that Mohanty attempts to name and define are axiomatic to my study not just because they implicate certain forms of Western feminist thought but also because they question my own transparency. Her analysis does not restrict itself to Western feminists but includes as well anyone (any woman in her specification) who uses similar explanatory methods whether in the West or in the Third World in attempts at cross-cultural analysis of patriarchy. I am emphasizing here the ways in which my own study is implicated in the very processes it is attempting to disrupt. As a Western educated critic whose textual readings derive substantially from Western feminist thought, I do not write, in other words, from an unproblematic position of innocence or transparency.

My study will focus on the revision of two distinct moments in British colonial history by two contemporary feminist playwrights, the one (Churchill) a British national, the other (Wertenbaker) a "multinational writer" based in Britain.[11] My study will also focus on the reception in the West of these two feminist revisions of colonial history. My quest for specificity and particularity troubles not just the generalized formulation "feminism" (a term which, as Mohanty points outs, retains strong neocolonialist and racist impulses in Western scholarship) but also the specification "Western feminism" (an inadequate attempt at particularity). I question the homogenization and erasure of difference—national, racial, ethnic, sexual, class—still retained in the specification "Western feminism." I also question the "westernness" presumed and bracketed in that specification. My own use of the term is not intended to concede discursive authority but attempts, following Mohanty's lead, "to trace a coherence of *effects* resulting from

the implicit assumption of 'the west' (in all its complexities and contradictions) as the primary referent in theory and praxis."[12] I am interested in the textual strategies in both *Cloud Nine* and *Our Country's Good* (as well as in the critical reception of the two plays) which codify the implicit assumption of "the West" as the primary referent.

I will suggest, in this study, that both *Cloud Nine* and *Our Country's Good* call for contextual readings. The two plays emerged from the political and cultural specificities of contemporary England. Written in 1979, *Cloud Nine* was based on a workshop on sexual politics that drew from white actors of diverse sexual experience.[13] To that extent, I will argue, it took as its primary referent the specific material conditions and the sexual politics in Britain on the eve of the Thatcher years, prior to the outbreak of the AIDS epidemic. *Our Country's Good* was based on the realities confronting the British criminal justice system as well the realities confronting the British theatre in the 1980s.[14] I will be arguing that it similarly took as its primary referent the specific material conditions in Britain during the Thatcher years. I will not be suggesting that these plays have no relevance or implication in other contexts or that these plays embody mimetic reproductions of Britain as it was at the time of their writing. Rather, I will be suggesting that the cross-cultural relevance of the two plays cannot be presumed throughout "the West." My interest will be to locate the textual strategies—the practices of writing and reading—that authorized the valorization of two texts based on specific readings of circumstances in contemporary Britain across the differentiated geographical and cultural spaces discursively formulated as "the West." The intellectual and cultural currency that the two plays have acquired in the West is of critical importance in my analysis for it reveals the interconnection between literary production and the exercise of global power. Addressing the ways in which the processes of cultural production are implicated in global relations of power, Mohanty asserts:

> There is, I shall argue, no universal patriarchal framework that this [feminist] scholarship attempts to uncover and resist—unless one posits an international male conspiracy or a monolithic ahistorical power hierarchy. There is, however, a particular world balance of power within which any analysis of culture, ideology, and socio-economic conditions has to be necessarily situated.[15]

The world balance of power to which Mohanty refers is a system of global capitalism dominated by the West. I will suggest that the processes of cultural production at play in Western feminist valorization of *Cloud Nine* and to a lesser extent *Our Country's Good* must be understood within the context of the power relations sustained by global capitalism. I will attempt to understand how two play-texts, shaped at some level by concerns about Britain's recent economic and political decline, became emblematic feminist texts throughout the West.

Cloud Nine and *Our Country's Good* both re-enact and revise British colonial history, the former colonial Africa late in the nineteenth century, the latter colonial Australia late in the eighteenth century. What is the relationship between the Western subjects who are presented in these metaphorical re-enactments of colonial encounter and the non-Western objects who seem even in their effaced re-presentation, to hold together these metaphors? Post-colonial critics have long argued that the construction of the ideal bourgeois subject in Europe historically derived in part from the negotiations and contestations that occurred in racialized colonial settings.[16] In other words, the ideal bourgeois subject was historically realized not in the European centre *per se*, but, at least partially, in the colonial margin where the language of race produced antithetical "others" who facilitated the cultivation of the ideal (male) white subject. White supremacist ideologies, solidified in varied colonial margins, complemented, in intricate and contradictory ways, patriarchal and heterosexist ideologies in securing the Ideal Subject in the European centre.

What does it then mean that the contemporary construction of the ideal feminist subject in Churchill's and Wertenbaker's re-presentations of the British nation seems metaphorically to rely on colonial history as a discursive site? Are Churchill and Wertenbaker, in addition to their revision of oppressive ideologies of gender and sexuality, also revising and contesting oppressive ideologies of race and colonialism? Are the two writers and their critics discursively reproducing British colonial history with "colonizing" Western feminist modifications? Or are these two metaphorical re-enactments of British colonial encounters at once the sites of disruption and re-inscription of the discourses of colonialism? Is the cultivation of the ideal white self still being authorized by the production of racialized "others" and by racialized gender definition?

Those then are the set of questions that open up this study and hold it together. They are posed from the implicated position of my own migration to the West. They are also posed in the order of what Homi Bhabha has termed "a supplementary intervention":

> .... a supplementary intervention is similar to what parliamentary procedure recognizes as the supplementary question. It is a question that is supplementary to what is put down on the order paper, but by being 'after' the original or in 'addition to' it, gives it the advantage of introducing a sense of 'secondariness' or belatedness into the structure of the original. The supplementary strategy suggests that adding 'to' need not 'add up' but may disturb the calculation.... The supplementary strategy interrupts the successive seriality of the narrative of plurals and pluralism by radically changing the mode of articulation.[17]

The questions I pose in this study are a "belated" supplementary intervention intended to 'add to' the critical discourses that have been generated in the West by *Cloud Nine* and *Our Country's Good* but not intended to 'add up' to a conclusive resolution of the contradictions within these critical discourses.

The impulse to particularity and materiality that underwrites this thesis leads me to the contention that even though *Cloud Nine* and *Our Country's Good* both re-enact British colonial history as metaphorical sites, the two plays are, in the end, different in a number of important ways. In the first place, the colonial contexts they reproduce and revise are irreducibly distinct. The specific crisis in English legal thought and practice and the impulse to Empire that led to the establishment of Australia as a penal colony late in the eighteenth century are closely connected with but also irreducibly different from the project to 'civilize' and 'christianize' the African and the impulse to Empire that led to the establishment of minority settler colonies in Africa at the end of the eighteenth century. Nothing illustrates the distinction in the colonial histories that I am attempting to emphasize here better than a comparison of their sharply contrasting aftermaths. While Australia has emerged from colonial encounter as a First World white majority settler nation, Africa has emerged as a Third World continent. It is instructive that while the English Stage Company felt compelled to tour Australia with their production of *Our Country's Good*, *Cloud Nine* has, to my knowledge, not toured or been produced in any of Britain's former colonies in Africa. Moreover, while Australia is one of the sites in which *Cloud Nine* has been produced and acclaimed, *Our Country's Good* has not, to my knowledge, been produced in any of Britain's former colonies in Africa.[18] My analysis of the re-configuration of colonial history in the two plays takes into account the critical distinctions in colonial practice in the different historical and discursive conjunctures that the two plays re-enact.

I will be arguing, in my study, that Churchill and Wertenbaker present broadly similar but also somewhat different (re)visions of history. They both continually implicate history in attempts to define and disrupt the oppressive material conditions of the present. Churchill, I will be arguing, specifically constructs history as a narrative implicated in the reproduction and normalization of oppression. For Churchill the constitution of the discrete and polar gender identities that constrain and contain sexual expression in contemporary Britain cannot be

understood outside an implicated historical narrative. In her vision of history, the inscription of polar gender roles represents a "colonization" of bodies by dominant patriarchal ideology, a process that she parallels with British colonial occupation of Africa late in the eighteenth century. Wertenbaker, in her revision of history, seems to suggest that contests in the contemporary British polity as well as those in Britain's past can be effectively understood by being projected and displaced onto a "distant" metaphorical setting. My study traces and compares the effect that these visions have on the revisions and/or repetitions of colonial history that Churchill and Wertenbaker undertake in *Cloud Nine* and *Our Country's Good* respectively.

Notwithstanding the fact that Wertenbaker and Churchill write from broadly similar political and social contexts, the concerns addressed in the two plays I am studying are not identical. *Our Country's Good*, I will be suggesting, argues for penal reform in contemporary Britain. It calls for a penal process that recognizes and values the humanity of convicted criminal offenders. As well, the play affirms the social value of theatre and suggests, specifically, that the theatre is an important humanizing force. In her re-presentation of the "transportation" of convicted criminal offenders to colonial Australia in the eighteenth century, Wertenbaker disputes the "gender blind" historical record and discloses specific feminist interests. She demonstrates that the transportation system was marked with clear gender differences. Centred on lives of the transported female convicts, her play is, in many ways, an attempt to dramatize their survival and triumph in a perilously harsh environment. This marks an area of critical distinction between her play and other accounts—fictional as well as historical—of "transportation that I examine in my study."[19]

Cloud Nine is, perhaps, a much more explicitly feminist play. Churchill attempts to undermine the illusion of polar genders—male and female. She discloses that gender is not an immutable natural fact but rather is a performative accomplishment punitively instituted by patriarchal and heterosexist ideologies.[20] She contests the givenness of discrete and polar gender

identities, the givenness of discrete and polar sexual identities, and the givenness of heterosexual desire. Set in colonial Africa in the Victorian age, the first act of her play also contests the givenness of bipolar racial identities. *Cloud Nine* represents a sustained contestation of the sovereignty of various oppressive and oppressing subjectivities.

Given the disparate concerns of the two plays under review, I will be adopting interrelated but different approaches in the study of each text. My primary interest in *Our Country's Good* will be to trace the processes that authorize an exclusively white feminist revision and reproduction of colonial history. What processes, I will be asking, authorize Wertenbaker's disruption of the historical record of British legal and penal practices in colonial Australia from the perspective of gender difference but not, it would seem, that of racial difference? This interest also frames my post-colonial re-reading of *Cloud Nine*. Making reference as much to the text as to its critical reception I will interrogate the writing and reading practices that seem to allow the lives of specific upper class white women in colonial Africa to be generalized as representative of the lives of women under a universal transhistorical patriarchy. My analysis of *Cloud Nine* additionally examines the play's contestation of the sovereignty of the subject. My critique will adopt Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's skepticism regarding the efficacy for non-Western societies of purportedly deconstructive Western critical and creative practices. Spivak contends:

> Some of the most radical criticism coming out of the West today is a result of an interested desire to conserve the subject of the West, or the West as subject. The theory of pluralized "subject-effects" gives an illusion of undermining subjective sovereignty while often providing a cover for this subject of knowledge. Although the history of Europe as Subject is narrativized by the law, political economy, and ideology of the West, this concealed subject pretends it has "no

> geo-political determinations." The much publicized critique of the sovereign subject thus actually inaugurates a Subject.[21]

Drawing on Spivak's contentions, my specific supplementary question with regard to the critique of coherent subjectivity that Churchill attempts in *Cloud Nine* will be: To what extent are the contestations of gender and sexual identities that the play enacts a reification of the subject of the West or the West as Subject in a play set substantially in colonial Africa?

Because of its emphasis on specificity and materiality, this thesis examines each of the two plays under scrutiny in separate though interrelated chapters. Wherever appropriate I will compare the textual strategies that, in both plays, secure the implicit reproduction of the West as the primary referent or the ideal subject. I will also highlight the ways in which these textual strategies differ. My comparisons are the result of specific analysis and are therefore limited in scope. In my conclusion I attempt to trace the implications of my supplementary intervention. I close with the same question that opened the study: on the basis of the example of my specific re-readings of *Cloud Nine* and *Our Country's Good*, two celebrated Western feminist texts, is Empire being reinscribed in the wake of feminist revision? The structure of the thesis—the chronological arrangement of its chapters—is not intended to construct a narrative of linearity and resolution but rather traces the coherence of effects in the textual strategies used to construct the ideal subject in the two plays.

NOTES:

[1] Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1995), 199.

[2] Homi K. Bhabha, "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation," *Nation and Narration* ed. Homi K. Bhabha (New York: Routledge 1990), 291.

[3] Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (London and New York: Verso, 1994) 83- 86.

[4] Ahmad, *In Theory*, 86.

[5] Ahmad, *In Theory*, 86

[6] Bill Aschroft, Gareth Griffith and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures* (New York, Routledge, 1989), 1-13.

[7] Aschroft, et al. *The Empire Writes Back*, 2. My emphasis.

[8] Aschroft et al. *The Empire Writes Back*, 2. My emphasis.

[9] Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses," in *Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory: A Reader*, eds. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 196- 220.

[10] Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes," 197- 8.

[11] For a discussion of Wertenbaker's multinational heritage and the impossibility of assigning her a single nationality see Susan Carlson, "Issues of Identity, Nationality, and Performance: The Reception of Two Plays by Timberlake Wertenbaker," *New Theatre Quarterly* 9:35 (August, 1993), 267-268.

[12] Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes," 196.

[13] See Caryl Churchill, *Cloud Nine*, Revised American Edition (New York: Routledge, 1994), vii. I explore the implications of this workshop in my analysis of *Cloud Nine*.

[14] See Timberlake Wertenbaker, *Our Country's Good* (London: Methuen, 1991) preface. I explore the implications of these contextual specificities in my detailed analysis of the play.

[15] Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes," 198.

[16] See, for example, Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1992); and Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*.

[17] Bhabha, "DissemiNation," 305.

[18]For a comprehensive performance history of *Our Country's Good* see Carlson, "Issues of Identity." Although I cannot definitively rule out the possibility that *Cloud Nine* has been performed in any of Britain's former colonies in Africa, my research, which found records of numerous performances for throughout the West, was unable to locate any record of performances of the play in Africa. I am grateful to Joanne Tompkins for drawing my attention to performances in Australia of both *Cloud Nine* and *Our Country's Good.*

[19] I am referring to Robert Hughes, *The Fatal Shore*: *The Epic of Australia's Founding*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987); and Thomas Keneally, *The Playmaker* (New York: Touchstone, 1987).

[20] My arguments here draw from Judith Bulter's contentions regarding the performativity of gender. See, for example, Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay on Phenomenology and Gender Feminist Criticism," *Performing Feminisms: Feminist Critical Theory and Theatre*, ed. Sue Ellen Case (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 294- 316.

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21 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak," *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, eds. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 271-2.

CHAPTER ONE:

RE-INVENTING BRITIAN, RE-MEMBERING AUSTRALIA: WHOSE COUNTRY'S GOOD IN *OUR COUNTRY'S GOOD*?

> Now this coast [New South Wales, Australia] was to witness a new colonial experiment, never tried before, not repeated since. An entire continent would become a jail. The space around it, the very air and sea, the whole transparent labyrinth of the South Pacific, would become a wall 14,000 miles thick.[1]

In *The Historical Novel* Georg Lukács examines why the rise of the historical novel coincided with the period of great social, economic, and political upheaval in Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century.[2] He suggests that fictionalization of history has as much to do with the present as it does with the past. Fictionalizing history represents an attempt to render crises in the present intelligible and coherent by re-configuring the past. In fictionalized accounts of history the radical and chaotic changes in European political economies in the nineteenth century—the industrial revolution and the rise of capitalism, the decline of the feudal society and the rise of the bourgeoisie, the decline of absolute monarchies and the emergence of liberal democracies—could be historicized and explained in evolutionary terms and in narratives of natural progress. In fiction, Lukács argues, history invariably becomes the site of multiple displacements and slippages as contemporary crises and uncertainties are reconfigured into well-ordered narratives of linear progress. Adopting Lukacs' contentions, this chapter examines the contemporary as well as the historical implications of Timberlake Wertenbaker's fictionalization of British colonial history in her play *Our Country's Good*.

The concerns addressed in *Our Country's Good*, I will be arguing, are ideally those of contemporary Britain—a "declining" Western power. The play is, I will be arguing, a re-

configuration of the contemporary British nation at a moment of perceived crisis. But this contemporary re-configuration of a Western nation is set in the past, in the margins of a European colonial power, and involves a fictionalization of history. In what ways does Wertenbaker re-configure Britain's colonial past in an attempt to render its contemporary crisis intelligible? I am specifically interested in exploring the ways in which her play repeats and/or resists the structure of racialized displacement and erasure that authorized British settlement in Australia in the eighteenth century. In *Our Country's Good*, a play based on Thomas Keneally's novel *The Playmaker*, Wertenbaker repeats and revises one story (complete and self-contained) to suggest the narration of another, one historical context—colonial Australia—is reproduced metaphorically to suggest another—contemporary Britain. The staging by a convict cast of George Farquhar's *The Recruiting Officer* in colonial Australia in 1788 is metaphorically re-deployed to confront new legal and political realities in contemporary Britain. That is to say, relative antiquity in the colonial margin is reproduced and revised in order to elaborate on the present in the metropole; one social and political landscape is mapped out and made to re-present and render coherent another.

Besides examining the effectiveness of Wertenbaker's metaphorical use of history in an examination of the contemporary British polity, I attempt to trace the implications of her (re)production of colonial Australia as the discursive site onto which a specific crisis in contemporary British jurisprudence can metaphorically be displaced, contested and resolved. I examine the extent to which Wertenbaker's metaphorical displacement and projection of this crisis may be a reproduction and repetition of the literal displacement and projection of an earlier crisis in English criminal justice that occurred in the eighteenth century and resulted in the colonial settlement of Australia. To the extent that reading practices are as integral to the process of cultural production as writing, I will be examining, in addition to the play-text, the critical debates that have been generated by *Our Country's Good*. My aim is not to emphasize the

differences between my readings of the play and those of other critics but rather to disclose and engage the general discourses (both creative and critical) surrounding this play.

In *The Fatal Shore*, Robert Hughes argues that late in the eighteenth century, during which period formative liberal humanist notions were questioning a system of criminal punishment predicated on the symbolism of blood and public torture, England faced the dilemma of what to do with its massive ranks of convicted criminal offenders. With the justification for public hangings steadily eroding, and without the facilities to hold convicted offenders, the English criminal justice system was under urgent strain. As a result of this strain the idea of exiling English convicts to distant colonies emerged as a strategy for securing life and property at home by removing and displacing the "criminal class." Hughes states:

> Australia was settled to defend English property not from the frog-eating invader across the channel, but from the marauder within. English lawmakers wished not only to get rid of the "criminal class," but if possible to forget about it. Australia was a cloaca, invisible, it contents filthy and unnameable.[3]

To support his contentions Hughes provides as an example of the arguments articulated in defence of "transportation" the following comments made in 1812 by Jeremy Bentham (then a noted legal thinker):

> [Transportation] was indeed a measure of experiment…but the subject-matter of experiment was, in this case, a peculiarly commodious one; one set of *animae viles*, a sort of excrementitious mass, that could be projected and accordingly was projected—and as it should seem purposely—as far out of sight as possible.[4]

What the accounts by both Bentham and Hughes omit are the racialized processes of displacement and erasure that at once authorized and effaced the production, in the English imagination, of an inhabited continent as the ideal geographical site for the resolution of an

internal crisis in juridical thought and practice. It is this structure of racialized displacement and omission that I am attempting to trace in *Our Country's Good*. Historically, the cultivation of the ideal bourgeois English subject relied on the production and containment of a potentially redeemable white criminal class but, just as prominently, also on the production and containment of the utterly incorrigible racialized "other." This chapter attempts to trace Wertenbaker's re-presentation of the complementary and contradictory interactions between the discourses of class and criminality and the discourses of race. Wertenbaker's use of colonial Australian history as a metaphorical site for the resolution of contests in contemporary Britain risks discursively repeating the same processes of racialized displacement and projection that were first enacted during the colonial settlement of Australia. Then, as, I will argue, is the case now, a perceived crisis in British jurisprudence was contested and resolved by being discursively and institutionally projected onto a distant "empty" (or at any rate "emptiable") land. What are the historical implications of Wertenbaker's re-enactment of colonial history? What contemporary issues is she addressing? What is the relationship between colonial history and contemporary metaphor?

Wertenbaker describes *Our Country's Good* as a play about the theatre: "It's a play about what theatre means and does…what the theatre means both to people who are in it and to people who are not in it—what the place of theatre is in the world."[5] She discloses in the preface to her play that its writing had been inspired by a production she had attended in 1988 of Howard Barker's *The Love Of A Good Man* performed by long-term prisoners in a British prison.[6] She remarks, regarding that performance, "That night was pivotal in the writing of *Our Country's Good*: it confirmed all our feelings about the power and value of the theatre."[7] Wertenbaker goes on to disclose the urgency of the interests and investments which motivated the writing of *Our Country's Good*: "As I write this [the preface], many Education Departments of prisons are being cut—theatre comes under the Education department—and the idea of tough punishment as

justice seems to be gaining ground in our increasingly harsh society."[8] Despite the fact that it is not explicitly stated, it is contextually clear that Wertenbaker is, in this instance, attempting to make a case for penal reform specific to the material conditions in contemporary Britain.

Wertenbaker includes, as additional introductory material providing important contextual information for readings of her play, seven letters written to her by three men serving sentences in British jails.[9] She hopes "these letters speak for themselves and, indeed, for our world."[10] Although she uses the rather inflated term "our world," and although many of the experiences she is concerned about may well have some transnational application, the letters are marked with the particularity of the contemporary British penal process. All three men are involved in theatrical productions while in prison (in one instance the play under production is *Our Country's Good*). They write to share with Wertenbaker the productive and valuable experiences that the opportunities for performance had presented them.

A final piece of introductory material included in the play is a quotation from *Pygmalion in the Classroom* by R. Rosenthal and L. Jacobsen. Rosenthal and Jacobsen report how twenty students, selected at random "in a certain elementary school, were reported to their teachers as showing unusual potential for intellectual growth."[11] After eight months these children, who had been singled out for special attention by the teachers, showed significantly greater gains in intellectual performance than the rest of the children in the school. Rosenthal and Jacobsen therefore demonstrate that "the change in teachers' expectations regarding the intellectual performance of these allegedly 'special' children had led to an actual change in the intellectual performance of these randomly selected children."[12] By including Rosenthal's and Jacobsen's arguments in the preface to her play, Wertenbaker supports the case for penal reform in Britain and, specifically, for the inclusion of prisoner education and rehabilitation in the penal process. She is arguing that criminal behaviour is not innate but rather is the product of environmental forces and is therefore alterable. I am suggesting that the formal preface, the "prison letters" and

the quotation from *Pygmalion in the Classroom* provide the framework within which the play is read. Quite clearly, then, *Our Country's Good* addresses the realities of the present-day penal process in Britain although it re-enacts colonial Australia as a metaphorical setting.

Wertenbaker seems to be staking a geographically and historically limited claim for penal reform and, specifically, to be calling for a penal process in Britain that recognizes and values the humanity of convicted criminal offenders. She questions the reductive understanding of the administration of justice as the imposition and enforcement of stiff penalties on criminal offenders—an argument that repeats some of the arguments for legal reform first made in Europe generally and in England specifically late in the eighteenth century. In this respect, contemporary metaphor seems to repeat colonial history. Her play aims, through a historicized demonstration of the emancipatory and humanizing potential of the theatre, to criticize the punitive and repressive tendencies that seem to underpin contemporary British juridical thought and practice. Set in Australia between 1788 and 1789, the play re-enacts—and revises—the historical staging of Farquhar's *The Recruiting Officer* by British convicts who had been "transported" to serve varied sentences in Australia. The play seems to make the case that involvement in the processes of theatrical production liberates and transforms both the convicts and (at least some of) their gaolers. Wertenbaker appears to be arguing that greater emphasis be placed on prisoner education instead of on the enforcement of severe punishments. Much like Rosenthal and Jacobsen, she suggests that changes in social expectations will lead to changes in criminal behaviour.

Our Country's Good, alongside its opposition to current penal practice, addresses the place of the theatre in contemporary Britain. In a recent unpublished essay, Ann Wilson emphasizes that the celebratory views about the social value of the theatre put forth in the play ought to be interpreted within the specific context of the debates in Britain in the 1980's about state subsidies to the arts and the value of art to the life of the nation.[13] She claims that the

election of the Conservative Party (under the leadership of Margaret Thatcher) to power in Britain in 1979 "marked the beginning of a radical reconfiguration of the relation between the state and its citizens."[14] Wilson argues that this reconfiguration was predicated on the belief that Britain, a nation regarded as "decayed" in the late twentieth century, could be restored to its former glory. Amid inflamed rhetoric on the need to curb excessive government spending (as well as the general decline in moral values), the renewed quest for glory in the 1980s marked a turning point in the British government's commitment to funding the arts, including the theatre.

Wilson points out that successive Conservative governments declined to adjust the level of arts funding for inflation, insisting that the arts seek corporate sponsorship to make up the shortfall. This policy change adversely affected the theatre in Britain in general but was particularly harmful to such theatre companies as The English Stage Company, which is committed to producing plays by new writers. The existence of politically committed theatre companies became particularly precarious since such companies were unlikely to attract corporate funding. Against this background, Wilson claims that the production of *Our Country's Good* served as "an apology for the value of the theatre which was produced by the Royal Court [where the English Stage Company is resident]."[15] She charges that *Our Country's Good*'s apparent invocation and endorsement of the English tradition of great playwrights—Governor Arthur Phillips invokes Shakespeare, Marlowe, Jonson, and Sheridan as well as playwrights from ancient Greece when stressing that "the theatre is an expression of civilization"[16]—amounted to a capitulation to Thatcherite ideals of restoring Britain to greatness. I think the political, social and economic contexts of the production of the play that Wilson provides are invaluable to an understanding of the forces that shaped *Our Country's Good*. However, Wilson's account leaves unstated the fact that the contemporary re-configuration of the British nation is displaced onto colonial history. Contemporary metaphor, I suggest, is recalling and repeating an earlier moment of English glory, that of colonial expansion and *pax Britannica*. A

contemporary moment of perceived "loss" is being projected onto a historical moment of conquest and perceived "greatness" in an attempt to render the challenges of the present coherent.

I have dealt in some detail with issues of context in *Our Country's Good* not only because it is of crucial importance in understanding the play but also because I think my materialist reading suggests crucial parallels between *Our Country's Good* and Caryl Churchill's *Cloud Nine* (which I examine in Chapter Two). Churchill also addresses issues of contemporary relevance to the British polity—enduring sexual and gender oppression. She also uses British colonial history as a metaphorical setting for a substantial portion of her play. She parallels Britain's colonial occupation of Africa late in the nineteenth century with the continued inscription of gender normative roles and the policing of sexual conduct in Britain late in the twentieth century. In both *Our Country's Good* and *Cloud Nine* the cultivation of the ideal white subject in contemporary Britain relies on a colonial metaphor. To what extent do the two texts repeat the racialized processes that helped to produce and secure coherent white subjectivity in colonial history? To what extent do the two texts contest colonial history? Or do the two texts at once reproduce and contest of colonial history?

Given *Our Country's Good*'s spatial and contextual specificity, it seems odd that the critical discourses generated by the play have been rather general and decontextualized. With the exception of the article by Ann Wilson (discussed above) which examines the political and social context in Britain during the production of the play, little critical attention has been devoted to issues of geographical, political and historical context. Critical attention has generally been devoted to a decontextualized and non-specific contestation and/or defence of the play's apparent foundational premise—that theatre is (universally and transhistorically) liberating. Such readings, which do not engage the historical and geographical specificities within which the play functions, repeatedly conflate the 'implied' geographical and historical space which the play

addresses with the 'real' geographical and historical space in which the play is set. As well, such criticisms conflate the play's foregrounded homogenized space of cultural encounter with its effaced contestatory space of inter-cultural encounter.

I am seeking to insert geographical and historical specificity into the readings of *Our Country's Good*. In interrupting the critical debates that the play has invited, I seek not so much to contradict the specific conclusions reached by various critics regarding the theatre's efficacy in securing individual and communal transformation (or, alternately, the theatre's implication in oppressive strategies of containment), as to expose and contest the restrictive terms within which these critical debates are formulated. I am attempting, in other words, a supplementary intervention; an "adding to" critical discourse that disturbs the terms of critical debate even as it tries to elaborate and expand on specific arguments. I seek, in the "belated" or "secondary" sense suggested by Homi K. Bhabha, to disclose the range of questions that have been discursively delimited in these debates.[17] Such questions include: What does it mean for a Western (British based) playwright to use the history of colonial encounter (the settlement of Australia) metaphorically from the site of enduring, if undisclosed, privilege? What does it mean for a Western playwright to reproduce and repeat, apparently without critical difference, British colonial history in an effort to interrogate the contemporary British nation? Further, what investments are disclosed and/or effaced when a metaphorical reproduction of the colonial settlement of Australia appears to legitimate that original settlement by depicting a land only sparsely inhabited by a noble but dying race and by erasing cross-cultural/inter-racial contact? What discourses of colonialism continue to discursively authorize the colonial history of Australia, a history overdetermined, Hughes contends, by the original displacement and projection of a crisis in British criminal justice in the eighteenth century,[18] to remain available for a repeated and renewed (if metaphorical) displacement and projection two hundred years later? At the level of Western critical practice, what investments are disclosed and/or effaced by

criticisms that seem to rely on generalizing and/or glossing over the historical and geographical specificities of a play set across the fraught frontiers of colonial history and cross-cultural contact? To begin answering these questions, I embark on a textual analysis of *Our Country's Good*, an analysis informed by the materialist and contextual specificities I have tried to establish in the foregoing.

> I had retired from His Majesty's Service, Ralph.... I don't know why they asked me to rule over this colony of wretched souls, but I will fulfil my responsibility.... What is a statesman's responsibility? To ensure the rule of law. But the citizens must be taught to obey the law of their own will. I want to rule over responsible human beings, not tyrannise over a group of animals. I want there to be a contract between us, not a whip on my side, terror and hatred on theirs.
>
> Captain Arthur Phillip, RN, Governor in Chief of New South Wales.[19]

The central action in *Our Country's Good* is a revision of a historical event—the staging of *The Recruiting Officer* by an almost all white convict cast in Australia in 1788 to commemorate the birthday of King George III. Ann Wilson suggests that Wertenbaker's adaptation of this incident "is primarily concerned with theatre as a means of liberating people, because it offers them the chance to envision a future in which they are free, and of creating a community of players which serves as a paradigm for this utopian society."[20] Wertenbaker seems to demonstrate that the theatre can be a humanizing force that negates the consequences of harsh existence for both the convicts and their goalers. Wilson points out that the success of this demonstration demands extensive revisions in the portrayal of both Ralph Clark, the officer who directs the convict production, and Arthur Phillip, the Governor who inspired the mounting of the production. They are both depicted as benevolent and selfless. This represents a departure from the historical record as well as from Keneally's *The Playmaker*, where the impulses and

incidents leading up to the convict production of *The Recruiting Officer* are much more nuanced and often seem contradictory. In the novel neither Lieutenant Clark nor Governor Phillip appear to be motivated by the desire for penal reform or convict rehabilitation that compels them to action in the play.

The value and power of the theatre as a humanizing force is demonstrated by the celebratory conclusion of the play. A select cast of convict actors overcome great adversity to successfully mount a production of *The Recruiting Officer.* They have by the end of the play established a strong sense of community. Wertenbaker's demonstration of the transformative power of the theatre culminates in (or is consummated by) the romantic relationship between Mary Brenham, a convict woman, and Lieutenant Clark. In many respects, this union between a convict and a Marine officer provides one of the two climactic moments in the play (the other, I argue, is Liz Morden's decision to cooperate with the penal authorities and participate in the production of the play). In this sense, the play reproduces the structure of a conventional romance. Wilson, in one of her earlier articles on the play, argues that Wertenbaker's depiction of this relationship (in sharp contrast to Keneally's, which she contends is situated within unequal and abusive power relations inherent in a penal colony) is a expression of true love that marks a point of transformation and liberation for both Mary and Ralph. This relationship, she argues, "suggests that the theatre allows us to dream about who we might be and indeed allows us to see the possibility of realizing, if not actually to realize those dreams."[21]

In a subsequent article Wilson contradicts her previous favourable reading of the relationship between Ralph and Mary.[22] She is troubled, correctly in my view, by the fact that romantic love across radical difference—a low class convict women and a married upper class Marine Officer—is posited as the climactic moment of magic and purity that resolves the otherwise intractable conflicts on which the play is based. I do not intend to completely discount the possibility of romantic relationships across radical difference, but rather to challenge

Wertenbaker's apparent depiction of the relationship between Ralph and Mary as emblematic of the humanizing and emancipatory potential of the theatre. I am bothered by a formulation that presents a benevolent man of superior economic and social status rescuing a demure convict woman from her unfortunate circumstances in an abusive sexual economy. I am also bothered by the fact that this romantic relationship occurs against the background of the objectification of Betsey Alicia (Ralph's wife) and the depiction of Ralph as a victim ("imprisoned" until he met Mary, unable to express true love). Finally, I question the use of the context of a theatrical production to distinguish between the single "good" romance (Ralph and Mary) and the numerous "bad" ones such as the relationship between Duckling Smith (another convict woman) and Harry Brewer (a naval officer). I am suggesting that a problematic romanticization rationalizes this distinction and makes the consummation of the relationship between Ralph and Mary a climactic moment of the play.

This implications of the romantic relationship between Ralph and Mary extend beyond their individual lives and personal circumstances. This relationship enables—and obscures—the deployment of new strategies for social control: increased surveillance and visibility. I opened this chapter with an epigraph from Robert Hughes in which he contends that the establishment of a convict colony in New South Wales in 1787 signaled the beginning of an unprecedented experiment in which an entire island was [*as if uninhabited*] converted into an English jail. Wertenbaker's contemporary metaphor crystallizes this production of a distant inhabited island as an ideal English jail. *Our Country's Good* depicts the penal colony established in New South Wales as the site of a sustained and relentless panopticism where convicted criminal offenders are brought into enhanced surveillance and complete visibility. In Foucauldian terms, the convicts are made perpetually available for assessments of normality as well as technical prescriptions for normalization.[23] Inasmuch as the two texts are set in roughly the same historical moment (the late eighteenth century), *Our Country's Good* may be usefully read

intertextually with Michel Foucualt's *Discipline and Punish. Discipline and Punish* is a study of the evolution of the right to punish and the rise of penal institutions in European criminal justice systems.

In *Our Country's Good,* Governor Phillip is portrayed as a man interested not just in the punishment of criminal offenders but also in the wider implications of the administration of criminal justice. He is specifically interested (as shown in the statement cited above) in devising strategies for transforming the convicts in his charge into loyal and productive national subjects both in the context of their stay in confinement in Australia and, more importantly (for some of the convicts), upon release at the conclusion of their sentences. He argues, in a manner comparable to the views expressed by Rosenthal and Jacobsen in *Pygmalion and in the Classroom,* that criminal or any other tendencies are not innate but rather are the product of the environmental conditions. In his view, the convicts in the colony were denied the opportunity to acquire good values because of the deprived circumstances in which they lived in England. Speaking to his officers, he argues, "We learned to love such things [the theatre] because they were offered to us when we were children or young men. Surely no one is born naturally cultured" (4). Governor Phillip is worried that a penal process which does not include prisoner education and reform will do little to prevent future criminal conduct. He seeks to intervene against the convicts' criminal behaviour through education and the productive inculcation of appropriate values.

Wertenbaker's revision of the character of the colonial governor as well as that of Ralph Clark mirrors, in some ways, her own struggle for a penal process in contemporary Britain that recognizes and values the humanity of prisoners. I do not imply, though, that because certain parallels exist between the views adopted by these two colonial officers in the play and those adopted by the playwright in her preface, a literal equation of the two perspectives is possible. That is, I do not imply that the two officers embody in any sense "the playwright's voice."

Wertenbaker's depiction of the governor is, I reiterate, different in important ways from Keneally's. However, her revision is not entirely without antecedent in the history of convict "transportation." Historically, as is recorded by Hughes in *The Fatal Shore*, a number of governors sent to supervise Australian convict colonies attempted a variety of interventions aimed at "reforming the criminal mind."[24] After all, as Bentham wrote, the displacement of England's "criminal class" to Australia, was "indeed a measure of experiment."

Foucault delineates, in *Discipline and Punish*, an important paradigmatic shift that occurred in western juridical thought and practice late in the eighteenth century. This paradigm shift involved a fundamental change in the ways in which European criminal justice articulated and exercised the right to punish. This change in juridical thought and practice coincided with the erosion of the absolute authority of the monarchy in much of Europe. The change was authorized by the emerging mechanisms of power—"technologies of power"—based on the political economy of the body. Prior to this shift, punishment (torture and executions) had been predicated on public spectacle, theatrical representation and the symbolics of blood. Punishment, under the previous political economy, was a spectacular illustration of the absolute authority of the monarchy. It illustrated, publicly, the reigning monarch's ability to find and punish crime and thus secured civil obedience by means of bloody example. It emphasized the monarch's absolute right over citizens' lives, a right to life, paradoxically maximized by the monarch's unchallenged ability to end life. However, in Foucault's argument, the use of torture and execution as public spectacles that enforced the authority of the reigning monarch gradually lost effectiveness as public punishment became shrouded with ambiguity and slippage. Public hangings, for example, gradually became the sources of vulgar popular entertainment in which the condemned were heroicized, instead of the carefully regulated solemn theatrical representations of the sovereignty of the monarch that they were intended to be.

The slippages that marred the spectacular representation of the authority of the monarchy during public punishments mirrored the erosion in the late eighteenth century of the absolute authority of the monarch. With the rise of liberal humanist ideals the right to punish was increasingly articulated in terms of preserving the sovereignty of the law and not that of the monarchy. A new mode of punishment, crystallized in the rise of penal institutions, emerged. Penality altered punishment from a public spectacle to a secret confinement. As well, penal institutions signaled a shift from erstwhile efforts to punish the criminal body in spectacular fashion to the use of confinement as a strategy for containment *and* for the transformation of criminal desire. In other words, penal institutions enabled a shift in focus from punishment as the public inscription of pain on the criminal body to confinement as the means for secretly and productively confronting the criminal mind.

The arguments advanced by Governor Phillip in *Our Country's Good* seem to demonstrate the change in juridical thought and practice that Foucault outlines in *Discipline and Punish*. Within the confines of the Australian penal colony ("as far out of sight as possible" in Bentham's phrase), Phillip initiates an intervention which, while not replacing torture and public hangings as such, seeks to transform criminal desire. In Act 1, Scene 3 (2- 5), a scene aptly entitled "Punishment," the governor and his senior military officers discuss the impending executions of several convicts found guilty of new crimes (thefts). The governor is squeamish about authorizing hangings and suggests flogging instead: "Have these men [the condemned] lost all fear of being flogged?" (2). In response he is informed by Captain David Collins (the Advocate General) and Captain Watkin Tench (an officer of the Royal Marines) that hangings should take place without delay "for the good of the colony"(5). In addition, the two officers inform the governor of the limits of flogging and the efficacy of public hangings: sentencing a convict to more than two hundred and fifty lashes will probably result in death, "with the disadvantage that the death is slow, unobserved and cannot serve as an example" (3).

Despite Collins' bellicose statements, the effectiveness of hanging and other forms of public torture have by this point in time already been eroded. Considerable ambiguities have emerged. Instead of the spectacular example that Collins imagines, hangings in the penal colony have been reduced to sources of vulgar pleasure. As Harry Brewer (a midshipman with the Royal navy) reports to the governor, "The convicts laugh at the hanging, Sir. They watch all the time"(3). Tench adds, "It is their favourite form of entertainment" (3); "There is much excitement in the colony about the hangings. It is their theatre" (4). It is while the colonial officers discuss the degeneration of public hangings to a form of entertainment that the idea of a theatrical production is discussed. The theatre would be a more appropriate and productive form of entertainment—a less vulgar source of pleasure—than public hangings. Phillip sees plays as the means for productively introducing the convicts to refinement and culture. This signals the shift in focus from an understanding of criminal justice as merely the imposition of stiff penalties and spectacular punishment to an understanding of criminal justice as involving, additionally, efforts to curtail criminal desire.

Many of the same arguments briefly discussed in Act One, Scene 3 are repeated and elaborated in the scene entitled "The Authorities Discuss The Merits of the Theatre"—Act One, Scene 6 (16-25). At the end of this scene, the governor endorses Ralph's proposal for a convict production of *The Recruiting Officer* despite the vociferous opposition of several of the officers under his charge. Major Robbie Ross, for instance, contends that the staging of the play represents a particularly reckless experiment at a time of great adversity: "This a convict colony. The prisoners are here to be punished…."(18), "I will not accept this….this play—order will become disorder. The theatre leads to threatening theory and you, Governor, you have His majesty's commission to build castles, raise armies, administer a military colony, not fandangle about with a lewdy play!" (25). Reiterating Major Ross' objections, Tench scoffs at Phillips' interest in convict reform: "A crime is a crime. You commit a crime or you don't. If you commit

a crime you are a criminal. Surely that is logical. It is like the savages here. A savage is a savage because he behaves in a savage manner. To expect anything else is foolish" (19). I will explore the complementary and contradictory interconnections between the white "criminal class" and the non-white "savages" later in this chapter.

Overriding all these objections, Phillip argues that "the theatre is an expression of civilization" (21). When putting up play, the convicts, he argues, will be using the refined language and expressing the delicate sentiments of eminent English writers, which will remind "them that there is more to life than crime and punishment" (21). Ralph supports the governor, asserting, using the example of Mary Brenham, that the limited rehearsals he had conducted prior to the meeting had already had productive effects on the convicts. "The last word," Phillip concludes, "will be the play, gentlemen"(25). A small number of the convicts in the colony (an odd half a dozen out of eight hundred) are selected to participate in the production. Among the criteria used in the process of selection besides (presumably) acting ability are literacy and (I will contend presently) race. The selection of half a dozen economically deprived convicts to participate in the production of an upper class play has a profound effect on these convicts in terms of the inculcation and normalization of bourgeois ideology.

Phillip insists that Ralph use Liz Morden in the play and that he assign her one of the lead roles. Liz has been condemned to death for upholding the convict code of honour and refusing to cooperate with the investigation by the penal authorities of a theft in the colony. Phillip's insistence that Liz be included in the "convict cast" provides a particularly significant example of the interventionary strategies he has in mind. Foucault suggests that the shift in the exercise of the right to punish from the criminal body to criminal mind necessitated the introduction into the criminal justice system of material extraneous to the strict determination of guilt or innocence. Such material included an assessment of a convicted offender's potential for reform. Phillip's keen interest in Liz Morden's fate and his determination to use her as example

of successful reform presents an example of Foucault's argument, if counter-intuitively. Liz, in contrast to Mary, for example, is no model prisoner. In a moment of almost desperate honesty (when the success of convict production is in serious doubt) Phillip confides in Ralph, explaining his reasons for selecting Liz in deliberate detail:

> Phillip: Liz Morden—(He pauses.) I had a reason for asking you to cast her as Melinda. Morden is one of the most difficult women in the colony.
>
> Ralph: She is indeed, Sir.
>
> Phillip: Lower than a slave, full of loathing, foul mouthed, desperate.
>
> Ralph: Exactly, Sir. And violent.
>
> Phillip: Quite. To be made an example of.
>
> Ralph: By hanging?
>
> Phillip: By redemption.
>
> Ralph: The Reverend says he's given up on her, Sir.
>
> Phillip: The Reverend's an ass, Lieutenant. I am speaking of her humanity.
>
> Ralph: I am afraid there may not be much there.
>
> Phillip: How do we know what humanity lies hidden under the rags and filth of a mangled life? I have seen old soldiers given up for the dead, limbs torn, heads cut open, come back to life. How do we know what humanity lies hidden under the rags and filth of a mangled life…if we treat her as a corpse, of course she will die. Try a little kindness, Lieutenant. (58).

Phillip is concerned with much more that the imposition of stiff penalties and spectacular punishment. Ann Wilson avers, correctly in my view, that Phillip seems not to care about the possibility of Liz Morden's guilt and indeed seems desperate to accept her reluctant and belated professions of innocence.[25] Wilson also avers that Liz capitulates and breaks the convicts code of honor "not because she fears for her own life, but because her hanging will jeopardize the

play."[26] She has belatedly become cooperative in the wake of the invitation to participate in the play. Phillip has made an example of her. She has been productively subjected to both an assessment of normality and a technical prescription for normalization. The shift from a regime based on punishing the criminal body to one based on eliminating criminal desire and producing docile productive bodies has clearly occurred in juridical practice in the Australian jail dramatized in *Our Country's Good*. Liz's conversion is therefore another problematic climactic moment in the play.

The shift in juridical practice that I attempt to describe above may help to explain the contradictory perception of the theatre as a process through which (at least the potential for) transformation is secured and as a process through which dissent is contained that characterizes critical response to *Our Country's Good*. While embracing the notion of theatre as means for social transformation, critics have been disturbed by the thought of theatre as a strategy for containment and social control. Wilson, despite her earlier endorsement of the theatre as a powerful medium that presents both the convicts and the jailers with opportunities for liberation and community, questions the final efficacy of Wertenbaker's project.[27] Esther Beth Sullivan, in her feminist materialist analysis of three plays by Timberlake Wertenbaker (*Our Country's Good, The Grace of Mary Traverse, and Three Birds Alighting on a Field*) is similarly ambivalent about Wertenbaker's depiction of the theatre. She adopts the Althusserian concept of interpellation to suggest that by extolling the humanizing capacity of the theatre, Wertenbaker deprioritizes an examination of the wider implications of ideology. She identifies the specific ways in which theatre can be used ideologically to produce compliant subjects.[28]

I share some of the misgivings expressed by both Sullivan and Wilson. But there is a level at which these concerns gloss over the considerable textual ambiguities, doubts and contradictions that question an unproblematic celebration of the theatre as redemptive. Quite clearly, the play's overall structure is celebratory. But moments of ambiguity, doubt and

contradiction disturb, in some degree, the overall sense of triumph at the conclusion of the play. Perhaps the clearest example of these doubts is the character realization of Dabby Byrant. To re-deploy (but also to also suggest the limits of) the Althusserian models of power relations that Sullivan relies on, Dabby refuses to be hailed or interpellated. She remains to the end the impossible figure of dissent. Although she participates in *The Recruiting Officer*, she does not accept the ideology that authorizes the production. While all of her colleagues are caught in the magic of performance, she plots her escape from the colony (84- 85). While all of her colleagues have at the end of the play become docile productive bodies with appropriate desires, she defies containment. Although she is subjected to assessments of normality, she resists the technical prescription of normalization.

Earlier in the play, during the process of rehearsal, Dabby questions with uncanny perceptiveness the play's relevance on the basis of an argument of class ideology: "I think *The Recruiting Officer* is a silly play. I want to be in a play with more interesting people in it" (73), "I want to play myself"(73), "I want to see a play that shows life as we know it"(74). Dabby cannot relate to the lives dramatized in *The Recruiting Officer*, particularly those of the women in the play, who, on account of class, had not had to make the difficult choices in life that she (Dabby) had. She resists bourgeois values. Dabby also questions casting practices that reinforce gender normative roles while eliding questions of class. She criticizes casting practices that permit the "convict actors" play roles across class lines, but prohibit acting across normative gender identities. In response to Mary's comment that she (Dabby) could not play Jack Wilful (a role much more challenging and imaginative than the maid she has been assigned to play) because Jack Wilful was a man, Dabby, mocking Ralph, says, "If Wisehammer can think that he is a big country lad, I can think that I am a man. People should use their imagination and people without imagination should not go to the theatre" (75). She reveals how casting policies in the theatre normalize gender roles and reproduce real-life male privilege. Wertenbaker, despite her

overall triumphal dramatic structure, is both self-aware and self-critical. She recognizes many of the dangers inherent in the theatrical process as she has conceived it that her critics (including myself) are concerned with. But is she as self-aware and/or self-critical of the "other" concerns that arise out of her representation of British imperial history?

On the basis of the materialist and textual analysis that I have undertaken above, my argument is, basically, that the concerns addressed in *Our Country's Good* are, fundamentally, the contemporary struggles of the British nation—a Western power. That is not to say that arguments regarding penality or assertions of the social value of the theatre are inherently or inevitably Eurocentric, just that the particular forms in which these concerns have been expressed in *Our Country's Good* are quite specifically situated, both culturally and spatially. I am contending that the material circumstances that the writing of *Our Country's Good* took as its primary referent make the play quintessentially Western. The re-configuration of a Western nation is authorized by the mutually re-enforcing but also contradictory ideologies of race, class, and gender. I have been trying to establish that Wertenbaker and her critics have, late in the twentieth century, displaced a perceived crisis in British political and legal systems onto colonial Australia. I have also been trying establish that this metaphorical displacement is a repetition of the original literal displacement of an earlier perceived crisis in British political and legal systems onto a distant land late in the eighteenth century. Under what terms have two displacements of the construction and narration of a European nation onto the colonial margin—the literal as well as the metaphorical—been at once authorized and effaced? Under strategies of literal as well as metaphorical containment does the question of why Eurocentric crises are contested and resolved (the one literally, the other metaphorically) on foreign land remain "unposed?" Why is there an unbridgeable rift, particularly in Wertenbaker's revision, between the idealized moral economy presided over by a benevolent sovereign imagined for the convicts and the elided violence of colonial occupation? In both the literal and metaphorical

displacement, what fills the "uncloseable" narrative space between, on the one hand, the production of an idealized institutional and discursive site for the reconfiguration of European governance and, on the other, the reality of inter-racial conflict and violent dispossession? I am inserting (with some modification) here what Peter Hulme, at the conclusion of his analysis of *Robinson Crusoe*, has described as the ultimate colonial question: *by what right land is taken away* [both metaphorically and literally] *from those who own it?*[29]

Historically, the displacement of the English convicts onto a distant landscape was secured by the racialized discourses of colonialism. These discourses produced knowledges of a land only sparsely populated by savages and therefore always already available for experiments aimed, in the safety of vast distance from home, at reforming the English criminal and cultivating the ideal bourgeois subject. The "uncloseable gap" was discursively (fore)closed by racialized discourses that rendered the incorrigible Aboriginal invisible at the same moment when the potentially redeemable white criminal subject was being brought under intensified surveillance and complete visibility.

How have Wertenbaker and her critics handled the ultimate colonial question in the metaphorical revision of convict "transportation" featured in *Our Country's Good*? What has become of the "uncloseable gap"? Is an exclusionary white supremacist logic similarly at work metaphorically as it was literally? Such a claim at first seems counter-intuitive, at best. The play, after all, introduces traces of aboriginal existence in the margins of the penal colony in an attempt to interrupt the racially exclusive logic that constructs the theatre as emancipatory. Wertenbaker's critics seem at points, if briefly, to recognize and criticize English imperialism pointing to the oppression of the "colonized"—the convicts and natives. Wilson and Sullivan both argue, in passing, that at the conclusion of *Our Country's Good*, the compliant convicts have been co-opted into England's imperial project.

However, to the extent that the traces of racial otherness under review seem perpetually incapable of disrupting the imperial logic that structures the play, the ultimate colonial question—by what right is land being taken away from those who own it?—remains, in the end, unposed. Wertenbaker's critics devote extensive space to considering the transformative efficacy of the theatre and seem able only very briefly and very belatedly to critique imperialism either through the highly problematic conflation of the convicts and the "unseen" natives as the oppressed and/or colonized or through decontextualized and non-specific remarks. My own attempt to pose the colonial question comes only after a lengthy engagement with the play's eurocentric debates. To that extent the ultimate colonial question seems, in the end, "unposeable." In Wertenbaker's metaphor as much as in the historical incident on which the metaphor revises the ultimate colonial question is discursively (fore)closed. A structure of racialized omission—reproduced in the play as well as in its critical reception—ensures that the colonial question is not just unposed but is, specifically, "unposeable." I re-examine and elaborate on the forces that ensure that the ultimate colonial question remains "unposeable" later in this chapter as well as in my analysis of Churchill's re-presentation of colonial Africa in *Cloud Nine* in Chapter Two of my thesis.

The traces of racial otherness in *Our Country's Good* serve to re-inscribe and efface—rather than to disrupt—the white supremacist assumptions that sustain the (re)production two hundred years later of colonial Australia as the ideal discursive site for contestations in British politics. Homi K. Bhabha asserts that the exercise of colonial power, in discourse, demands an articulation of forms of difference—racial and sexual.[30] He contends, further, that the discourses of colonialism turn on simultaneous recognition and disavowal of difference—racial, cultural, historical.

The construction of the lone ungendered "Aboriginal Australian" [sic] as well as that of "Black Caesar " [sic] in *Our Country's Good* embody, in my view, the simultaneous recognition

and disavowal of difference integral to the exercise of colonial power in discourse. It is significant that Wertenbaker unambiguously articulates the forms of racial difference in her play by attaching racialized identifications when "naming" these two characters—and not any "others"—in her cast-list and throughout the play. In fact, one of these characters is identified not by name but by racial/cultural origin and (retrospectively) by geographical location. And yet, the pointed recognition of racial difference in the play is concurrently disavowed. No other character is so unmistakably marked by race; whiteness as a racial category is at once presumed (always already known) and anxiously effaced.

The particular process of managing racial and cultural and historical difference in *Our Country's Good* through the simultaneous recognition and disavowal that I describe above is similar to the management of racial and cultural difference in Caryl Churchill's *Cloud Nine*. In her cast-list, Churchill pointedly categorizes Joshua as "black." No other character is marked so pointedly by race; whiteness is at once presumed and effaced. The ideal subject in the colonial margin is at once white and outside race—the universal Subject. In many respects, Joshua, "the black" in *Cloud Nine*, parallels "Black Caesar" in *Our Country's Good*. Both Caesar and Joshua, as the lone blacks in contact with white society, are portrayed in the condition that Bhabha has described as "colonial mimicry": "the desire for a reformed recognizable Other as a subject of a difference that is *almost the same but not quite";* almost white but not quite; anglicized but not English. [31]

The mimic figure is a condensation of the exercise of colonial power as a double articulation—simultaneous recognition and disavowal of difference. However, mimicry, Bhabha suggests, is also the inevitable site of slippage and resistance—"mimicry is at once resemblance and menace."[32] Mimicry is potentially, though not necessarily, emancipatory as it marks colonial discourses with the inevitable failure of attempts to contain racial difference. My reading of the portrayal of both Joshua and Caesar suggests that familiar racial stereotypes origin

are repeated by both playwrights in order to contain the menace of mimicry. Caesar in his initial brief appearances in the play seems to embody menace. As a non-English, non-white convict transported to the penal colony, he resists being anglicized: "I don't want to think English. If I think English I will die. I want to go back to Madagascar and think Malagasy" (54). He is also determined to escape captivity. This contrasts with Joshua who is an obsequious domestic servant. Ultimately, racial difference in each play is contained through the invocation of stereotypes. In his final action in *Cloud Nine* Joshua unexpectedly shoots at the colonial administrator in an apparent random act of treachery and violence; in the final action in *Our Country's Good* a terrified Caesar is compelled to perform, dead drunk, as an extra-textual servant in the convict production of *The Recruiting Officer*. Despite the similarities I have discussed above an important difference between Joshua and Caesar is the fact that one of them is an indigene, the other though marginalized on account of racial origin is a settler from "elsewhere."

The simultaneous recognition and disavowal of difference that I am attempting to analyze is, I argue, reproduced in the critical reception of *Our Country's Good*. Wertenbaker's critics invariably mark only the "Aboriginal Australian" and "Black Caesar" racially and culturally. Indeed, there is a sense in which "race" both as analytical category and as a descriptive label only enters critical discourse with respect to these two characters. The whiteness of the convicts and the officers is presumed—the "given" to which Caesar and the unnamed and ungendered "Aboriginal Australian" (or "the native" in some constructions) provide exceptions—but it also is effaced. The convicts and officers in the drama are (implicitly) racial subjects but they are also subjects outside race on the basis of whose experiences critical discourses attempt to generalize "universal truths" about the theatre.[33] I am suggesting that the process of simultaneous recognition and disavowal of racial and cultural difference precludes the posing of the ultimate colonial question even when a general rhetoric deploring English

imperialism in a general sense is employed in creative and critical discourse. It is the final impossibility—or at any rate the implausibility—of posing the ultimate colonial question in the wake of the simultaneous recognition and disavowal of racial, cultural and historical difference, that makes the articulation of the concerns of the play unmistakably Eurocentric.

Creative and critical attempts to contain racial and cultural difference in the description of the characters in *Our Country's Good* hint at other textual strategies deployed in the management of difference. In a fundamental sense, the dramatic structure of *Our Country's Good*—the perspective from which its story is narrated—serves to contain racial difference. (I have previously characterized this textual strategy as "a structure of racialized omission.") A narration of the Australian nation that opens with the staging of *The Recruiting Officer* in 1788 and is told almost exclusively from perspective of white principals involved in that production leaves no room for the posing of the ultimate colonial question. Questions regarding the legitimacy of colonial settlement have always already been precluded by such a perspective. The original inhabitants—those whose land is, metaphorically, being taken away—are reduced to traces that are insufficient to interrupt Eurocentric debates with a critique of imperialism.

It seems inevitable that having elected to structure *Our Country's Good* as a narrative of the triumphal staging of a play by convicts in a penal colony Wertenbaker, as if in spite of herself, relegates the indigenous inhabitants to a lone voice in the fringes unable to contest the imperial process. The lone Aboriginal is portrayed as a noble being, whose simplistic and idyllic existence is disrupted by the "mere" fact of European settlement: "a dream that has lost it way. Best to leave it alone." (2) By the time s/he realizes that European settlement was not a dream, which left alone would go away, it is much too late. S/he is dying (83). The play seems so focused with the debates regarding, on the one hand, the social value of theatre and, on the other, the most productive exercise of the right to punish, that it re-enacts a story of colonial encounter without any apparent contact. The play erases all traces of inter-racial contact, contest and

resistance. Instead, a brief attempt is made, just before its triumphal conclusion, to interrupt and haunt the general jubilation with images of the lone Aboriginal dying. Additionally, the convicts also report on the verge of their triumphal performance that "the savages" are dying of smallpox (83). Since all inter-racial contact has been erased throughout the play, these traces of the original inhabitants seem only to (re)produce the myth of noble but dying race. As the objects of a tragic but unfortunate fate, the lone Aboriginal is rendered incapable of posing the ultimate colonial question.

In its treatment of the aboriginal, *Our Country's Good* seems much more similar to Robert Hughes' *The Fatal Shore* than to Keneally's novel, *The Playmaker*. For Hughes, the founding of Australia is overdetermined not by England's illegitimate occupation of a distant land but by the displacement from England to Australia of the "criminal class." I do not suggest that the former should replace the latter as the perspective from which the Australian nation is conceived. That would constitute an inversion that does not disturb the terms of debate. "The power of supplementarity," Bhabha writes, "is not the negation of the pre-constituted social contradictions between the past and present; its force lies.... in the re-negotiation of those times, terms and traditions through which we turn our uncertain, passing, contemporaneity into the signs of history."[34] I am suggesting that the contestatory discourses of criminality, class, gender and race ought to be read as complementary in the cultivation of the ideal bourgeois subject in England and the founding of the Australian nation. Hughes' book strives to come to terms with Australia's "convict legacy." Such a premise for narrating the nation necessarily precludes the asking of the ultimate colonial question. "Aboriginal issues" remain outside the narrative he constructs. They can only occasionally be incorporated, as fading traces, into his narrative of the founding of Australia. Like Wertenbaker, Hughes enacts a sentimentalized depiction of the Aboriginal as a noble, simple but dying race. Nonetheless, unlike Wertenbaker, he does not erase contact.

Despite its similarities with *The Fatal Shore* in the production of "the Aboriginal," *Our Country's Good* adopts it basic narrative from *The Playmaker*. In his novel Keneally fictionalizes the staging of *The Recruiting Officer* by an all white convict cast.[35] Black Caesar (Keneally also marks Caesar, irreducibly, by race) plays no part in the show. *The Playmaker* (as has been pointed out by several readers) is at one level more explicitly about colonialism and dispossession than *Our Country's Good*. Unlike the play, the novel documents volatile inter-racial contact and contest. It does not sentimentalize or romanticize a "dying race." Keneally, for example, records the duplicity of colonial military officers who take advantage of the friendly curiosity of an Aboriginal community to capture and bring under intense surveillance one indigene (Arabanoo).

Notwithstanding—or perhaps as a result of—Keneally's more explicit focus on colonial encounter, racial and colonial stereotypes seem to proliferate in the novel. Arabanoo, after brief initial fright, seems grateful to his captors, particularly the governor, Phillip (with whom, it is nervously hinted, he has a sexual relationship). This reproduces a familiar paradigm in colonial encounter: the grateful, compliant native. This is also reproduced with Joshua in *Cloud Nine*. Black [sic] Caesar is portrayed as an incorrigibly violent man with a ravenous appetite and a bestial sexuality (so much so that Wertenbaker's revision of him seems a "positive" improvement). But I do not wish to engage in the identification of images as "positive" or "negative." Rather, following Bhabha's lead, I focus on the processes of subjectification—for both the colonizer and the colonized—made possible and plausible through the proliferation of colonial stereotypes. It is instructive, in this connection, that *The Playmaker* concludes with the triumphal staging of the play and with Caesar's arrest for assaulting Mary (the two incidents are conflated, the latter disrupting the former). Despite the fact that the novel is dedicated the novel to "Arabanoo and his brethen [sic], still dispossessed," it closes with an epilogue that documents in careful detail the historical fate of each of the white characters involved in staging *The*

Recruiting Officer and not, for instance, the fate of the various Aboriginal communities or even (Black) Caesar. At one level this dedication appears to reproduce Arabanoo, who in the novel may be (it is nervously hinted) Phillip's lover, as fetish object.

Returning to *Our Country's Good*, I suggest that Caesar provides an example of the play's ultimate inability to confront its own "uncloseable" racial gaps. Desperate to avoid punishment for attempting to escape, he bursts into a rehearsal and begs to be included in the convict production of *The Recruiting Officer*. Ralph's immediate response is a refusal. He lies to Caesar that all the parts have been taken. The director refuses to consider using him despite Caesar's theatrical experience and in the spite of Caesar's telling remark, "There is always a black servant in a play" (48). The implication is that he is being refused consideration on the basis of race. Caesar eventually plays the role of a servant not provided for *The Recruiting Officer* in spite of the fact that not all the parts had been taken and also in spite of the fact that no additional convicts are released to join the production. Indeed, the cast is so shorted-handed that Ralph, the director, is forced to play one of the roles. How the text resolves this short-handedness in such a way that Caesar can only play an extra-textual black servant is open to conjecture.

I have been suggesting that certain Western reading and writing practices have at once authorized and effaced the unproblematic metaphorical reproduction, in *Our Country's Good*, of colonial Australia as the ideal site for displacement and resolution of contests in the contemporary British nation. I have also been suggesting that this contemporary displacement repeats a literal displacement of contests in British jurisprudence two hundred years previously when British convicts were shipped "out of sight." Specifically, it repeats in the present the structure of racialized omission that justified British colonial conquest of Australia in the past. I have been suggesting, finally, that certain Eurocentric perceptions of the world prevented the posing of the ultimate colonial question both during and between these literal and metaphorical displacements.

NOTES:

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[1] Robert Hughes, *The Fatal Shore* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987), 1.

[2] Georg Lukacs, *The Historical Novel* trans. Hannah and Stanley Mitchell (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 19- 30.

[3] Hughes, *The Fatal Shore*, 1-2

[4] Jeremy Bentham, *Panopticon Versus New South Wales*, Qtd in Robert Hughes *The Fatal Shore*, 2.

[5] Timberlake Wertenbaker, Interview with Mick Martin, Qtd in "Issues of Identity, Nationality, and Performance: The Reception of Two Plays by Timberlake Wertenbaker," Susan Carlson in *New Theatre Quaterly 9.35* (August 1993) 267-288.

[6] Timberlake Wertenbaker, *Our Country's Good*, (London: Methuen, 1991), preface. There are several versions of the play in print. While two editions include the introductory material that I am examining here, one version does not.

[7] Wertenbaker, preface.

[8] Wertenbaker, preface.

[9] See the letters to Wertenbaker from Joe White, Greg Stabler Simth, and Billy Reid in the preface to *Our Country's Good.*

[10] Wertenbaker, preface.

[11] R. Rosenthal and L. Jacobsen, *Pygmalion in the Classroom*, Qtd in *Our Country's Good*, preface.

[12] R. Rosenthal and L. Jacobsen, Qtd in preface to *Our Country's Good.*

[13] Ann Wilson, "Issues of Nation and Theatre: Timberlake Wertenbaker' s *Our Country's Good*," unpublished paper. I thank Ann Wilson for generously sharing this paper with me .

[14] Ann Wilson, "Issues of Nation," 1.

[15] Ann Wilson, "Issues of Nation," 1.

[16] See Wertenbaker, *Our Country's Good* Act 1, Scene 6, "The Authorities Discuss the Merit of the Theatre,"16- 25; 21.

[17] For a description of the concept of supplementarity see, Homi K. Bhabha, DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern nation," *Nation and Narration* ed. Homi K. Bhabha (New York: Routledge 1990), 308. For the context in which I am using this term see the introduction to this thesis.

[18] See Hughes, xi- xv.

[19] Wertenbaker, *Our Country's Good,* 58- 9. Subsequent references to the play are included in my text.

[20] Ann Wilson, *"Our Country's Good*: Theatre, Colony and Nation in Wertenbaker's Adaptation of *The Playmaker*," *Modern Drama* 34 (1991): 23.

[21] Wilson, "Our Country's Good," 27

[22] See Wilson, "Issues of Nation and Theatre," 12-14.

[23] See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1979).

[24] Robert Hughes documents efforts at penal reform, not dissimilar to the one conceived by the governor in *Our Country's Good*, by a number of the officers sent to govern various penal colonies across Australia. See for example his discussion on Alexander Maconochie's attempts to shift the focus of penology from punishment to reform through institution of the "Mark system" (a carefully regulated regime of rewards and punishment based on convict behaviour) in Van Diemen's Land; *The Fatal Shore*, 489-522.

[25] Wilson, "Issues of Nation and Theatre," 3.

26 Wilson, "Issues of Nation and Theatre," 3.

27 Wilson, "Our Country's Good," 33.

28 Esther Beth Sullivan, "Hailing Ideology, Acting in the Horizon, and Reading between Plays by Timberlake Wertenbaker," *Theatre Journal* 45 (May 1993) 156.

29 See Peter Hulme, "Robinson Crusoe and Friday," *Colonial Encounters: Europe and The Native Caribbean* (Methuen: London and New York, 1986), 175- 224.

30 Homi K. Bhabha, "The Other Question: Stereotype, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism," *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 66- 84; 67.

31 Homi K. Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," *The Location of Culture* 85- 94; 86. I examine the interconnection between "colonial mimicry" and colonial stereotypes" in greater detail in my analysis of Joshua in chapter 2 of this thesis.

32 Bhabha, "Of Mimicry", 86.

33 Remarks within the text as well as in critical discourse concerning Wisehammer's Jewish heritage complicate but do not, in the end, undermine the notion of whiteness that I am articulating here.

34 Homi K. Bhabha, "DissemiNation," 307.

35 See Thomas Keneally *The Playmaker*, (London: Simon and Schuster, 1987).

CHAPTER TWO:

CASTING ASIDE COLONIAL OCCUPATION:

INTERSECTIONS OF RACE, SEX AND GENDER IN CARYL CHURCHILL'S *CLOUD NINE.*

A certain ambivalence dominates my response to *Cloud Nine,* Caryl Churchill's drama in two acts featuring an audacious attempt to parallel sexual and gender oppression with colonial and racial oppression. On the one hand, I continue to be attracted by the prospect of solidarity among all oppressed identities. I am convinced, perhaps naively, that the process of human liberation must be all-inclusive or risk creating, for the most vulnerable identities, new forms of (old) oppressions, while those identities which marginally profit from exclusive struggle increasingly collude in the perpetuation of oppressive power. On the other hand, I am disturbed by the apparent ease with which a playwright and company drawn exclusively from and implicated by racial and colonial privilege make direct comparisons and equivalencies between gender/sexual and colonialist oppressions, despite critical material differences in the history of gender and sexual oppression within specific cultural contexts, and the history of colonialism and the peculiar history of gender and sexual oppression within colonialism. I am bothered by the fact that certain oppressed identities, for example white women, may have been provided with the prospect of empowering representation at the cost of consigning certain other identities, specifically African women, to further subjection and invisibility.

My examination of *Cloud Nine* concerns itself as much with the play-text as with its critical reception. As was the case in my reading of *Our Country's Good* in Chapter One, I am trying to examine a coherence of effects in Western feminist practices of writing and reading. This chapter therefore engages the critical and creative discourses generated by *Cloud Nine* as a cultural product. Critical reaction to *Cloud Nine* has focused disproportionately on what are perceived to be its "feminist accomplishments" to the exclusion of any in-depth examination of race and colonialism.[1] Where passing review of colonialism has been made, it is merely to point out how racism and sexism occasionally interpenetrate or how racism, the play's "other" concern,

illustrates sexism, the play's "central" or "ideal" concern. I am suggesting that the critical discourse generated by *Cloud Nine* repeats the structure of racialized omission reproduced in the play. I am bothered by the tendency in critical writing in this play to read forcible occupation in Act 1 as humour, to interpret acts of mass murder, arson, and violent repression by colonial settlers as "native rebellions," and to declare Africa suddenly independent (and therefore of no continuing relevance) at the end of the first act when the events of the play (and my own lived experience) hardly support such readings. No attempt is made, in this critical writing, to investigate the manner in which the peculiar experience of African women under British colonial occupation has suffered complete erasure in *Cloud Nine*. Nor is any attempt made to investigate the ways in which the experiences and struggles of upper class white women (complicit in colonial settlement) have been generalized, in a play set substantially in colonial Africa, to represent the plight of all women in a manner comparable to how men were historically generalized to represent all humanity.

One article, Elin Diamond's "Closing No Gaps: Aphra Behn, Caryl Churchill and Empire," appears to question the impact of the "foregrounding" by these two feminist playwrights of gender critique at the expense of race and colonization.[2] Diamond concludes that "unacceptable gaps" exist in the examination of race and imperialism in the works of the two playwrights, and attributes these "gaps" to their imperialist (British) background. However, despite noting in passing that women comprise half the population of colonized nations, Diamond does not proceed to specifically examine the inherent differences between the respective histories of "colonized" and "colonizing" women. Curiously, in two separate studies that examine *Cloud Nine*, Diamond herself foregrounds exclusively white feminist concerns and almost entirely ignores race and colonialism.[3] Has she failed, perhaps, to recognize the generalizing and/or erasing power of her own racially privileged reading strategies? Has she failed, therefore, to recognize the contradiction in a purportedly feminist creative and critical practice—and not just in the works of two British playwrights—that resists the victimization of (white) women by a phallocratic economy at the same moment that its own implication in

privilege and power is normalized and elided? This chapter attempts to trace the ruses of power (both institutions and discourses) that foster the appearance of mutual exclusiveness between the two intertwined oppressive economies dramatized in *Cloud Nine,* white supremacy and phallocracy.

Inspired by Michel Foucault's trenchant discussion of the "technologies of power" (in a study of the history of penal law and the history of human sciences),[4] I examine Churchill's attempt to investigate these two economies as an enactment of the complicated and contradictory mechanics through which power is (re)produced and exercised. Foucault provides a suitable model for analyzing the complex and contradictory interpersonal encounters, such as are dramatized in *Cloud Nine*, by contesting deterministic and univocal conceptions of oppressive power. However, I resist abandoning entirely, within the context of violent colonial encounter, notions of power based on the binary opposition between the "oppressed" and the "oppressors". I am convinced that it is most productive to analyze conditions of social injustice within a framework that combines these two apparently irreconcilable conceptions of power. That is to say, both of these models are insufficient in and of themselves to explain the intersections of race, class, gender, and sexuality in the production of the ideal subject in *Cloud Nine*. Foucault does not suggest that discursive power is exercised *instead of* repressive power. In his argument, contradictory discourses proliferate and are superimposed over largely undisrupted repressive structures. Following Foucault's example my reading of *Cloud Nine* formulates the phallocratic economy and the colonial economy neither as mutually exclusive sites of power that can be used to illustrate each other, nor as entirely separable sites of power that collude and/or collide, but rather as discontinuous, differentiated and hierarchized structures of power deriving and diffusing from a common epistemic regime.

The impulse towards solidarity and collaboration that motivates this chapter risks reproducing, in my own formulation, the same ahistorical comparisons and direct equivalencies that I argue undermine *Cloud Nine.* I also risk perpetuating the stereotypical processes of individuation, domination and marginalization that inform the construction of the colonial

subject in the play. It is vital to situate this play within the context of the Western creative and critical practices from which it emerged and within which it has circulated in the last sixteen years to widespread acclaim. It is also important to emphasize the ways in which these practices, even in their deconstructive and/or feminist configurations, continue to be implicated in colonial discourses and the exercise of global power. In this regard, following the example of Homi K. Bhabha, my readings of *Cloud Nine* must insist on trying to "clear a space for the 'other' question."[5] In his essay, "The Other Question: Difference, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism," Bhabha asserts:

> To pose the colonial question is to realize that the problematic representation of cultural and racial difference cannot be read off from the signs and designs of social authority that are produced in the analyses of class and gender differentiation. As I was writing in 1982 the conceptual boundaries of the west were being busily reinscribed in a clamor of texts—transgressive, semiotic, semanalytic, deconstructionist—none of which pushed those boundaries to their colonial periphery; to that limit where the west must face a peculiarly displaced and decentered image of itself in "double duty bound," at once a civilizing mission and a subjugating force. It is there, in the colonial margin, that the culture of the west reveals its *différance;* its limit text, as its practice of authority displays an ambivalence that is one of the most significant discursive and psychical strategies of discriminatory power—whether racist or sexist, peripheral or metropolitan.[6]

On the basis of Bhabha's contentions, I emphasize the ways in which Churchill and her critics have enacted a reproduction of an undifferentiated African landscape as the limit text of their critiques of gender and sexual differentiation. In a fundamental sense, I argue, Churchill and her critics attempt to read colonial and racial difference from the signs and designs of social authority produced by an analysis of Western gender and sexual difference. In addition to the invisibility of African women, I take issue with reductive and fetishistic reproduction in the play

of a generic and stereotypic African Man against whose dark reflection various empowering white subjectivities materialize. I also take issue with the exclusive focus by Churchill and her critics on Africa's colonial past to the exclusion of any investigation of the imperialism of contemporary global capitalism. A focus on the imperialism of the contemporary global economy would include an examination of the implication of Western processes of cultural production in the normalization of non-Western marginalization and exploitation.

Cloud Nine, in my formulation, features a multiple and highly differentiated structure of oppression that constructs the prevailing gender, sexual and racial definitions. Churchill demonstrates, as much by her silences, contradictions and inconsistencies as by effective and self-conscious dramatization, that these categories are not mutually exclusive; rather, they inter-relate and inter-connect in an arrangement of differentiation on the basis of perceived body identity (race, gender, sexual identity, sexuality, class as well as other categories), hierarchical classification and consequently homogenization, marginalization and normalization. White patriarchy forms the foundational basis for this structure. I will address the effectiveness with which Churchill, as both (a largely self-conscious) target and (a largely unconscious) instrument of power exposes these oppressive structures. I will also investigate the effect of the various dramatic devices she uses in attempts to disrupt these oppressive categories and their informing ideology. These include instances of apparent cross-casting, the destablization of racial, gender, and sexual identities as discrete categories in character development and realization, and Brechtian alienation attained through a non-linear dramatic structure and a historicized plot. My study will focus on the possibility that, as a result of the complex dynamics of power ceaselessly and contradictorily at play, the disruption of these categories is concurrently facilitated and invalidated throughout the play.

Churchill identifies white patriarchy as the philosophical basis of the multiple structure of oppression early in the play. In his opening statement, Clive, a senior, upper class administrator in the colonial Empire in (undifferentiated) Africa, says:

> This is my *family*. Though far from home

We serve the Queen wherever we may roam.

I am a father to the Natives here.

And a father to my family so dear.[7]

This statement exposes not only a multiply oppressive structure, but also the inter-relation between the colonization of Africa (and of African bodies) and that of white women and children within a patriarchal structure. The social order constructed reveals itself to be white in its dominant racial ideology, masculinist in its dominant gender ideology, and heterosexist and monogamous in its dominant sexual ideology. In attempting to expose and disrupt this social order Churchill discloses such oppressive notions as compulsory heterosexuality, immutable and hierarchical bi-polar gender identities and ultimately immutable and inherently hierarchical bi-polar racial and sexual identities.

Churchill's exposition and attempt at disruption begin with a dramatization of the multiple structure of oppression. This occurs most graphically, in my view, in Act 1 Scene 3 (37-46), during which scene Clive and Harry (both white colonial settlers and both men) are supervising the flogging of their native domestic servants. Joshua, Clive's senior domestic servant and trusted ally, flogs the other African workers—"the stable boys"—for not being "trustworthy," for "whispering," for "visiting their people," for "going out at night," and for "carrying knives." While the men are administering this punishment the white women are kept in the house with the blinds down; under masculinist gender constitution physically strenuous acts such as flogging and other violent components of colonial empire-building are constructed as male acts from whose rigours white women and children are shielded. These white women and children are marked by crucial class distinctions. Betty, the colonial administrator's wife, as upper class settler woman—as the ideal bourgeois woman—is subjected to a much more rigorous gender performance than are Ellen, her governess, and Mrs. Saunders, a widowed settler of inferior social status. Edward, Clive's young son, is similarly subjected to intense socialization by both his parents as well as by two domestic servants to ensure his attainment in

adulthood of the bourgeois ideal.

Significantly, the women, whose bodies are scripted onto by patriarchy, reinforce their oppression by performing (through both speech and conduct) their apportioned gendered roles: "The men will do it [the flogging] in the right way...We have our own part to play" (38); ... "Luckily this house has a head, I am squeamish myself but Clive is not " (39). The part they have to play is the consistent production, in a deeply theatrical sense, of docile, obedient bodies useful in subordinate support of the colonial economy. Churchill specifies that the role of Betty be played by a male actor in the first act of the play. This casting choice physicalizes and concretizes the occupation of her body and that of other women by patriarchy. She says in self-introduction: "I am a man's creation as you can see And what men want is what I want to be" (4). She (and indeed all the other women in this scene) displays a crucial facet of colonial occupation as she seems to consent to her oppression, a consent at once authorized and undermined by the glaring inequalities in power. The history of colonialism (both of territories and of bodies) is replete with instances in which it entrenches itself through the consent of its subjects in complement with the threat of force.

The introduction of Edward into this scene presents the final facet of oppression portrayed in the play—the "colonization" of (white) upper class children by a patriarchal family structure that seeks to compulsorily script onto their perceived sexed bodies a "natural" bi-polar gender identity and a "natural" heterosexual disposition. Edward reveals the ways in which the colonial margin functions as a site for the cultivation of the ideal (white, upper class, male) subject. He is beaten for playing with a doll because, as he has been told before, "dolls are for girls." In a powerful illustration of the intersection of the discourses of race, gender and class, Churchill parallels the brutal and unjustified flogging suffered by the colonized Africans for their "misbehaviour" with the beating suffered by Edward for his transgressing prescribed gender roles. The on-stage beating occurs concurrently with the beatings suffered by the Africans off-stage. At the very outset of her play, Churchill illustrates some of the multiple but inter-related sites of white patriarchal oppression: the colonization of Africa and the enslavement of African

bodies, and the metaphorical colonization of upper class settler women and children in a white patriarchal family structure.

A critical facet of oppression that is consigned to invisibility in *Cloud Nine* is the unique deprivation suffered by African women and children, who do not feature at all in the play. Unlike the oppression of the settler women, which was mitigated at least in part by duplicity in racial and economic privilege, and that of African men, which even under extreme colonial deprivation was mitigated in some degree by male privilege, the experience of African women under both autogenous and colonial misogyny (the latter historically reinforced the former though it simultaneously disempowered African men) deserves but fails to receive specific and separate representation and investigation. The exclusion of African women presumes the existence of a transhistorical and universal patriarchy and elides important distinction between women in terms of colonialism, race and class. My argument is that the construction and/or disruption of the ideal white subject in *Cloud Nine* must be understood from a standpoint that takes in account the at once contradictory and complementary discourses of race, gender, sexuality and class.

As she exposes—and fails to expose—the multiple sites at which white patriarchal oppression variously manifests itself, Churchill deploys a number of dramatic strategies to disrupt the categories inherent in this epsitemic regime, including what Diamond[8] and Janelle Reinelt[9] classify as "cross-racial" and "cross-gender" casting. Such characterizations, although in common use, are fraught with difficulty. This use of "cross-casting" needs to be situated in the general context of contemporary Western theatre theory as diversely propounded by such theorists as Elin Diamond, Judith Butler and Richard Schechner. It is within the context of this critical and creative practice, I suggest, that the reproduction of the discourses of colonialism in *Cloud Nine* ought to be read. My interest here is to establish the ambivalent and contradictory relationship between these specific contestations of the conceptual boundaries of Western metaphysics and the stereotypical construction of the colonial subject by Churchill and her critics. I am tracing, in other words, the relationship between Western self-presentation and Western re-presentation of racial and colonial "others." All these theorists focus on dismantling

the symbiotic inter-relation between oppressive gender and sexual ideologies and the prevailing modes of theatrical representation. They seek to redefine the conditions of theatrical vision by presenting oppressed identities with subject positions formulated, at least partially, outside dominant ideology. Such subject positions enable the subversion of dominant ideology. Significantly, none of these contestations of the sovereignty of subjectivity in Western metaphysics extend to the colonial periphery. In Bhabha's terms, none of these theorists clears a space for the "other" question.

I begin my attempt to provide a theoretical context for *Cloud Nine* with a review of Judith Bulter contentions regarding the performativity of gender. Basing herself on Simone de Beauvior's claim that "one is not born a woman, but, rather, one becomes a woman," Butler, in "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory" (as well as in her book *Gender Trouble*: *Feminism and The Subversion of Identity*), adopts the philosophical doctrine of constituting acts from the phenomenological tradition to demonstrate the perfomativity of gender and the potential for its exposition, deconstruction and reconstruction—the capacity for its subversion.[10] She states:

> ....gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceede [sic]; rather, it is an identity tenuously instituted through time—an identity instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts*. Further, gender is instituted through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self.[11]

Butler's conception of gender affirms Beauvoir's assertion that "woman" is a historical construction and not a natural fact. Butler makes a firm distinction between "sex as biological facticity and gender as the cultural interpretation or signification of that facticity," even as she contests the given-ness of sex as a biological facticity. [12]

Butler argues that discrete and polar gender identities are punitively regulated cultural

fictions whose reproduction sustains a system of compulsory heterosexuality based on opposing "natural" sexes with "natural" attractions for each other. Her project aims beyond providing women, as oppressed subjects, with the capacity to effect social change. It points to the ontological insufficiency of the falsely essentializing and oppressive category "woman." It seeks to disrupt the reification of sexual difference as the founding moment of Western culture and calls, in conclusion, for contestation of the gender script, for a different sort of stylized repetition of acts to be accomplished through performances out of turn and unwarranted improvisations. Although it predates Butler's arguments by nearly a decade, the casting choices and character realizations in *Cloud Nine* represent, I suggest, a theatrical enactment of Bulter's call for constestations of the gender script through performances out of turn and unwarranted improvisations.

In an attempt to deploy the notion of performativity to grapple with the problematics of female identity and representation in Western culture, Elin Diamond embarks on an insightful intertextual reading of Brechtian theory and feminist theory in "Brechtian Theory/Feminist Theory: Towards A Gestic Feminist Theory." [13] This essay seeks "the recovery of the radical potential of the Brechtian critique and a discovery, for feminist theory, of the specificity of the theatre."[14] She appropriates key Brechtian concepts—*Verfremdungseffekt,* the "not, but" historicization, and *Gestus*—and reinterprets them using key feminist concepts: gender critique, the dismantling of the ideology of sexual difference, questions of authority in women's writing and women's history, and spectatorship and the body. Emerging from this intertextual reading is a theatre-specific aesthetic—gestic criticism—that subverts the male gaze by complicating both theatrical representation and spectatorship. This is accomplished through the separation of the actor from the role; the role from its own implicated historicity; and through interventionist disruptions of narrativity. Many of these dramatic devices feature in *Cloud Nine*.

Diamond suggests, for example, that the Brechtian concept of *Verfremdung*—the defamiliarization, in performance, of words, ideas or gestures in order to provoke fresh appreciation and insights—be deployed to critique gender differentiation. She provides as an

example of this feminist *Verfremdung* the "cross-dressing" (a rather erroneous characterization) that occurs in *Cloud Nine*. The concept of "not, but," through which process an actor invests a character's actions and choices with a multiplicity (and not singularity) of possibilities, could, she suggests, be deployed to subvert the reification of sexual difference in Western culture. Churchill's casting choices, which insist on separating the actor from the role, constitute examples of "not, but." The Brechtian concept of historicization, which posits present day realities as phenomena with an important and alterable history and which uses historical settings to define and comment on contemporary themes, would be used to address the need in feminist discourse to situate female identity as a historical process. The structure of *Cloud Nine*, which recalls and implicates history in the processes of polar gender constitution, is an example of historicization.

In an editorial that specifically addresses itself to issues of casting in the American theatre, entitled "Race Free, Gender Free, Body-Type Free, Age Free Casting," Richard Schechner appears to test the theatrical feasibility of an expanded version of Butler's call for performances out of turn, and also to broaden Diamond's gestic criticism as he tantalizingly investigates the improbable possibility of a theatre in which body type, race, age, and gender were discarded in the assignment of roles.[15] Dividing the American theatre into two kinds, "Mainstream" (those policies espousing openness but fundamentally defined by white male privilege) and "Particularist" (formed by marginalised identities, for example, black, gay, lesbian, and deaf theatres), he proceeds to implicate mainstream theatre in the perpetuation of dominant ideology.

In terms of casting, Schechner faults mainstream theatre for reinforcing, through choices informed by a naturalistic bias and literalness, the arbitrary and oppressive body identities valued by dominant ideology, as though they were natural and objectively definable. He states that such casting practices serve to sustain in the theatre, as in real life, white male privilege, reserving for actors from this group the best roles. He calls for a flexible approach to casting that, by making clear distinctions between character and actor, would allow for the use of cross-casting in select

instances to make social comment. Nevertheless he realizes the danger of co-optation and appropriation by a profoundly oppressive world/theatre if cross-casting were indiscriminately used (cross-casting could be used to mask real oppression and undermine resistance). Accordingly, he defends the right of particularist theatres to, on occasion, insist on a strategic adoption of realism and naturalism in casting. The casting choices Churchill stipulates in *Cloud Nine* as well her character construction offer an example of the strategic disruption of identity in the theatre that Schechner suggests.

The construction of character and the casting choices directed in *Cloud Nine* ought then to be apprehended against the background of the disparate theorizing outlined above. The use of cross-casting and of other theatrical strategies as projects, in the theatre, to demonstrate and subvert the arbitrariness—the performativity—of racial, gender, sexual and other identities would seem to enjoy a fundamental, admittedly limited, feasibility. Butler writes on the limits of the theatre metaphor and on the susceptibility of theatrical acts of gender subversion to being innocuously (indeed pleasurably) contained within the spectacle of dramatic illusion in ways that may be reactionary and may even reinforce the grip of these identities in "real" life. On-stage transvestitism, for instance, may invite amusement, but this does little to improve the perilous nature of transvestism off-stage.

With the exception of Schechner, none of these theorists addresses questions of race. All of them either implicitly or explicitly presume the general context of the "West." Schechner's limited examination of race restricts itself to the United States and does not attempt to extend its conceptual boundaries to include issues of colonial contexts. Against this background, I am specifically interested in the ways in which the attempted destabilization of coherent subjectivity in a Western play-text set in colonial Africa discloses an interested creative and critical desire, as Gayatri Spivak has argued, to conserve the West as the ideal subject or the subject of the West.[16] The specific efficacy of the casting choices made by Churchill are therefore not clear-cut. In the bid to actualize cross-casting, she brings simultaneously into play at points self-consciously, at other points apparently unconsciously, a complex array of forces at once

complementary and contradictory both within themselves and in relation to each other.

Cross-racial casting is introduced through the character of Joshua. In her cast list Churchill describes Joshua as Clive's black servant who is played by a white actor. This description presents the first level of cross-casting, at which level the concurrent process of facilitation and invalidation of coherent racial subjectivity and an eventual reification of a white episteme is dramatized. At this level, cross-casting challenges the conflation of skin colour and racial identity by dominant ideology and seeks, by portraying a white-skinned actor performing a black racial identity, to destabilize and problematize this conflation. Could Butler's argument for a different sort of gender performance, a different stylization, be adopted here? This apparent cross-casting is, however, seemingly invalidated by the very process that facilitates it. In order to disaffirm, in performance, the notion of racial identities stably and immutably defined by skin colour, it must first be stabilized and reified during casting as well as in the perception of the audience. It seems, therefore, to be a strategy that cannot resist containment within its own spectacle and novelty, a containment abetted by the fact that, in terms of race, it is the only such non-traditional choice. Further, the playwright seems to be trapped within dominant ideological configurations and popular perceptions. She unproblematically describes Joshua as a "black [man]" and the actor playing him as a "white [man]" in her cast list and in her introduction to the play (I discuss the introduction in some detail presently) thereby re-conflating skin colour and racial identity and reiterating the existence of discrete and stable polar racial categories.

Confining analysis of the problematization of racial identity through the character of Joshua to casting choice would be misleading. Joshua's character construction and development appears to contradict any apparent cross-casting. For *cross-casting* to occur, I problematically contend, the racial identity both of the actor and the character in question must, paradoxically, be perceived as stable and be clearly defined. This is not quite the case with Joshua. "Cross-casting" is problematic as a label to the extent that Joshua's skin colour and his stated and performed racial identity are stricken with indeterminacy and ambivalence. Racial identification has as a result been complicated or made ambivalent; an ambivalence that, in Bhabha's argument, authorizes but also potentially threatens the discourses of colonialism. Bhabha suggests that the

exercise of colonial power turns on the simultaneous recognition and disavowal of racial, cultural and historical difference. Joshua, at least in the original production of this play, was, in Churchill's account of events, played by a white-skinned actor as a matter of practical necessity, there being "no black member of the company [the Joint Stock Company]."[17] This led at a deeper level to " the idea of Joshua being so alienated from himself and so much wanting to be what the white man wants him to be that he is played by a white man."[18] Considering the emphasis that has been placed on the fact that the company comprised of actors of plural sexualities and sexual experiences (I discuss the implications of this "sexual diversity" later in my argument) this racial and colonial exclusiveness seems odd—or perhaps is instructive.[19]

The character of Joshua goes beyond obsequiousness and develops an active desire to be white, effectively renouncing any claims to an originary uncontested black identity. In his disruptive construction Joshua purports to become, quite literally, a white man with a black skin—black skin, white masks ?![20] He seems to embody that form of subjectification that Homi Bhabha classifies as "colonial mimicry."[21] Bhabha defines colonial mimicry as:

> the desire for a reformed recognizable Other, *as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite*. Which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an *ambivalence*; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage. The authority of that mode of colonial discourse that I have called mimicry is therefore stricken by an indeterminacy: mimicry emerges as the representation of difference that is itself a process of disavowal. Mimicry is, thus the sign of double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation, and discipline, which appropriates the Other as it visualizes power. Mimicry is also the sign of the inappropriate, however, a difference or recalcitrance which coheres the dominant strategic function of colonial power, intensifies surveillance, and poses an immanent danger to both 'normalized' knowledges and disciplinary powers.[22]

Churchill seems to configure Joshua as a "mimic man": almost the same but not quite; almost

white, but not quite; anglicized but not English. He says in self-description:

> My skin is black but oh my soul is white.
>
> I hate my tribe. My master is my light.
>
> I only live for him. As you can see,
>
> What white men want is what I want to be (4).

He regards Clive as his father and mother and disowns his own parents after their brutal murder by the forces of colonial occupation during an arsonist raid on his native village (54). He asserts that black people are bad people, that they are not his people and that he does not visit them (44). He administers indefensible and cruel punishment against his co-workers without remorse or feeling—punishment in fact invoked at his instigation. He has been christianized (he prays to Jesus) and domesticated. Despite his black skin, he is made (ultimately falsely) to seem to enjoy considerable power over Betty, Clive's wife. He continually spies on her, reporting her "misbehaviour" (just like that of "the stable boys") to a grateful Clive. He defies Betty's orders with misogynous insolence and a degree of impunity with the none-too-subtle connivance of his master. He has become an ingratiating subordinate enforcer—concurrently a target and instrument of power—of white patriarchy in conspiracy with white men.

Crucially, both Betty and Joshua, by being discursively manipulated into consenting to their differentiated oppression in return for limited power, lend legitimacy to Clive's superiority over them and expend futile energies battling each other to determine who takes second place and oppresses the other. Any prospect of co-operative struggle is rendered unlikely by the differences in their oppression and in the oppressive power they respectively wield. By playing off the subjects of colonial occupation against each other using offers of limited and discriminatory power, Clive entrenches his authority. Churchill dramatizes in this instance a central feature of colonial occupation—the concept of differential and hierarchical classification and, consequently, the differential diffusion of power—a feature she herself appears to fall prey to by reifying a white epistemic regime even as she assaults a universal patriarchy. The destabilization of racial identity through Joshua is not specifically attained by cross-casting, but

rather through character construction and development, whose effectiveness invalidates further the possibility of a neatly definable and subversive cross-racial casting. The character of Joshua as realized in this play represents, in part, an enduring reality of racial politics in Africa and in the African diaspora—the reality of marginally privileged colonial subjects who, at once utterly devastated by and attracted to the terrorizing power of colonialism, develop a desire to be white.

Through Joshua, not unproblematically, skin colour is established as being but skin deep and racial identity a mutable performative, capable of being cast aside, re-configured and de(con)structively re-adorned. This ambivalent—split and contradictory—nature of "racial otherness" in the construction of the colonial subject is, in Bhabha's formulation, the force that gives the colonial stereotype its currency and ensures its repeatability in changing historical and discursive conjunctures.[23] Joshua helps to illustrate that racial identity is a social construct which, by privileging the white-skinned man, was historically used to rationalize colonial occupation in Africa (and elsewhere) and the rapacious economic exploitation that ensued and persists.

As I stated in Chapter One, Bhabha contends that the figure of mimicry, as a crystallization of the exercise of colonial power, marks the discourses of colonialism with their inevitable failure by dramatizing the inability of these discourses to contain difference: "mimicry is at once resemblance and menace."[24] Joshua, in spite of his obsequious conduct in Clive's presence, seems to embody the threat or menace of mimicry in his conduct in Clive's absence. For example, he defies Betty's orders to him with misogynous insolence, obeying these orders only when Clive repeats them. Nevertheless, this particular menace or slippage suggests, in my view, not so much the inevitable failure of the discourses of colonialism as Clive's strategic incitement of specific collusions and collisions between patriarchy and white supremacy in order to contain resistance. A more potent instance of the menace of mimicry is presented when Joshua secretly narrates to Edward (the young "idealizable" white subject) a creation story in direct contradiction with the Christian creation story he is required to proclaim and broadcast. Asked by Edward to narrate, in the secrecy of early morning, another "bad story," Joshua replies, "First there was nothing and then there was the great goddess. She was very large and she had golden

eyes and she made the sun and the earth. But soon she became miserable and lonely and she cried like a great waterfall and her tears made all the rivers in the world...." (47). At the conclusion of the lengthy recitation of this subversive creation story, Edward says, "It is not true, though" (47). Joshua concedes, "Of course it is not true. It is a bad story. Adam and Eve is true. God made man white like him and gave him the bad woman who liked the snake and gave us all trouble" (47). Although Joshua and Edward end their encounter with a re-affirmation of the official creation story, the "rumour" of subversion—"the bad story"—which they secretly and conspiratorially indulge in powerfully illustrates the menace or the emancipatory potential inherent in mimicry. Joshua as a mimic figure simultaneously coheres the dominant strategic function of colonial power and poses an immanent danger to normalized knowledge and disciplinary power.

As if to contain the menace latent in mimicry, Joshua's final and dramatic action in the play (an act that concludes the first act) is a decontextualized act of violence. Joshua unexpectedly shoots at Clive at the end of the first act. This appears to be a contrived re-enactment of the stereotype of the randomly violent and murderous African. A colonial stereotype is invoked to deflate the menace immanent in mimicry. It is curious that the one black-skinned character portrayed on stage in *Cloud Nine* does not seek to disruptively trouble the fundamental assumptions of hierarchical racial identification; rather, Joshua self-denigratingly affirms the existence, in colonial Africa, of a racial bi-polarity and idolizes whiteness. It is instructive that the other Africans in this drama—the incorrigibly evil "stable boys" as well as the invisible and undifferentiated African women and children—who have, presumably, not mimicked whiteness, are denied representation except on the periphery: *off stage once; being flogged.* I contend that the antithetical (re)production of the colonial subject—the absent but always already criminal "stable boys" in contrast to the obedient and obsequious Joshua—authorizes the interventionary discourses of colonialism. Further, in view of Diamond's elaborate analysis of the potential in Churchill's plays to remove women from historical and conventional invisibility,[25] it is revealing that while seeming to offer white women the prospect

of non-romanticized representation, *Cloud Nine*, as if in conspiracy with colonizing white power, has sustained the continued invisibility and entrapment of African women. Not only does this play seem to be trapped within an ambivalent bi-polar racial identification, it ultimately reifies whiteness as the Ideal Subject and casts blackness as the Other, at best the mimic, even in the heart of Africa. It is disturbing that, in an act set in colonial Africa, white existence occupies centre stage and black deprivation is stereotyped (on-stage), marginalised (off stage) or erased.

Within the general context of the play, Joshua's unexpected shooting of Clive at the end of the first act can be interpreted, not only as a belated liberatory rejection of subjugation as Churchill well may have intended (he is afforded scant agency or motivation for such rebellious, re-constituting acts), but more prominently as an act of random violence in fulfilment of white supremacist stereotypes that assign an innate criminal tendency and incorrigibility to the black character. It seems to me that the depiction of Joshua finally slips from the emancipatory potential inherent in mimicry to the confines of a familiar but nevertheless anxiously repeated stereotype. In "The Other Question: Stereotype Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism" (a recent version of the essay I have cited previously in this chapter), Homi Bhabha underscores the singular importance of the invocation of 'fixed' racial stereotypes in the production of colonial discourses and the normalization of knowledge:

> An important feature of colonial discourse is its dependence on the concept of 'fixity' in the ideological construction of otherness. Fixity, as the sign of cultural/historical/racial difference in the discourse of colonialism, is a paradoxical mode of representation: it connotes rigidity and unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy and daemonic repetition. Like the stereotype, which is its major discursive strategy, it is a form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is already 'in place', already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated...as if the essential duplicity of the Asiatic or the bestial sexual licence of the African that needs no proof, can never really, in discourse, be proved.[26]

Joshua, quite apart from presenting the figure of mimicry, finally appears to enact the

paradoxical mode of stereotypical representation that Bhabha discusses. His shooting of Clive seems to embody the concept of fixity in the construction of the racial otherness. This incident repeats, anxiously, the already known character of the African as innately and randomly violent and treacherous. This act appears to legitimize and vindicate the paranoia that coloured many of the white settlers' actions throughout the first act from the massacre and arson on the native village, to the indefensible floggings, to Mrs. Saunders' flight from her home, to Clive's racial diatribes, to the general climate of fear and insecurity that is everywhere prevalent and that authorizes the exercise of colonial power.

Further attesting to the location of this drama in a white epistemic regime is the fact that Churchill, in her cast list and throughout the play, does not feel impelled to specify the racial identities of the (other) characters in the play with the exception of Joshua who she pointedly identifies to as "black." Whiteness, as if by irresistible inference, is the given circumstance to which Joshua provides the lone (in)visible exception of a mimicking inferior. Is the generally laudatory critical reaction to the play's contestation of gender and sexual difference similarly located in a white epistemic regime? Is whiteness, for instance, (in)visibly inscribed on the female bodies purporting to refuse the romanticism of identity? Is the stereotypical (re)production of the murderous colonial subject the cost at which the currency of the empowering white subject positions I discuss below are purchased?

Writing, as she does, from an exclusionary but effaced white episteme, it is not surprising that Churchill does not seek to explore issues of racial identity and colonialism in dramatic action subsequent to the first act. The comparison between sexual/gender oppression in contemporary Britain and British colonial settlement in Africa in the nineteenth century is abruptly abandoned at the end of the first act following the (unexplained) end of visible white presence in Africa. Without a visible white presence Africa, it seems, is an unworthy subject. After the first act, Africa, integral, I have argued, to the cultivation of the ideal white subject, is not mentioned again until the closing moments of the play. The marginal and ultimately stereotypical treatment of race and colonialism seems to serve merely as a backdrop (in Bhabha's terms, as a limit text) that authorizes and sustains a critique of Western (a category that

in critical readings of the play invariably seem to collapse into the racial classification white) gender and sexual difference. *Cloud Nine* features significantly more sustained attempts to use cross-casting to critique Western gender and sexual ideology. Though unstated, all the characters involved in the out-of-turn gender performances or unwarranted improvisations, and all the actors who play these roles are white. The whiteness of all these characters and actors is at once presumed and effaced by both Churchill and especially her critics who generalize these racially exclusive gender/sexual reconfigurations as applicable to all women under a universal patriarchal gender constitution. An implicit assumption of the West as a primary referent underwrites these readings.

Taking into account the sustained contestation of the sovereignty of subject attempted in *Cloud Nine*, the term "cross-gender casting" seems to me to be a somewhat inappropriate label as it negates the project it sets out to describe. Churchill has attempted to uncouple gender and sexual identities, and to demonstrate the performativity of gender through casting choices that cross the boundaries of sexual identity. Drawing back to Butler's firm distinction between sex as a contestible biological facticity and gender as the cultural interpretation or signification of that facticity (a view that Diamond's gestic criticism concurs with), the inaccuracy of the term cross-gender casting seems self-evident. A contention that sexual and gender identities are artificially conflated by dominant (heterosexist) ideology and that the performativity of gender can be made apparent in theatre through casting choices across the boundaries of biological sex, is negated by the characterization cross-gender casting. This term that re-articulates the very notion the process it describes seeks to uncouple. A more accurate description would perhaps be "cross-sexual identity casting." But even this description is insufficient. In making the firm distinction between sex and gender Butler does not accept the facticity of biological sex as would be implied by the term I suggest.

At the level of casting, by assigning "men," as perceived sexed bodies, to play "female" roles, and "women," as perceived sexed bodies, to play "male" roles (Betty is, in the first act, played by an actor identified as a "man"; Cathy, as a young child is, in the second act, played by

a grown actor described as a "man"; and Edward, as a young child, is, in the first act, played by an adult actor perceived as a "woman"), Churchill uncouples gender and sexual identities and appears to fulfil Butler's call for disruptive gender performances, for a different sort of stylization of acts. This is accomplished by the presentation of images of actors, as perceived sexed bodies, playing genderised roles or repeating performative acts in conflict with the gender that dominant ideology "naturally" and unalterably assigns them—"women" acting "masculine" and "men" acting "feminine." The uncoupling of gender and sexual identity is reiterated by doubling, through which process an actor plays more than one role in the course of a performance, in some instances, across the boundaries of biological sex. In the first production of the play the following roles, among others, were doubled: the same actor, perceived as a "woman," played Edward in the first act and Betty in the second; and the same actor, perceived as a "man," played Clive in the first act and Betty in the second. This demonstration of the performativity of gender and the possibility of transformation through gender performances out of turn, is contained by its specific theatrical setting. The actors' "real" sex and "real" gender cannot altogether be subverted in the theatre. Just like in cross-racial casting, the scheme to theatrically illustrate the performativity of gender (and consequently to undermine it) is simultaneously invalidated by the same means that set it in motion. The stability of "masculinity" and "femininity" as discrete and polar categories must first be affirmed and reified, before the seeming disruptiveness of cross-casting can be achieved and appreciated in novel performance.

The simultaneous facilitation and invalidation is complicated by the fact that cross-casting has to be interpreted against each specific character construction and realization. Betty's casting, for example, was ideally not designed to demonstrate the performativity of gender, but rather to crystallize—and literalize—her definition by patriarchy. Betty's (lack of) position is underscored by fact that her daughter Vicky (the "idealizable" bourgeois girl) is played by a lifeless doll and consigned, therefore, to an existence by proxy in the first act. That this casting choice, considered exclusively at the literal level of casting, achieves a theatrical breaking of the artificial nexus between gender and sexual identity, is unintended. In the second act, when she

revolts, with modest success (if any), against her oppression, Betty is played by an actor perceived as a "woman," bringing to a close this feminist "not, but."

Cathy, Lin's young child, is played by an adult actor perceived as a "man"—an example, also, of age-free casting. Her highly disruptive character construction complicates and enhances the subverting of polar gender identification. As a young child perceived as "female," played by a grown actor perceived as "male," she appropriates indices of both masculine and feminine behaviour, breaking, at many complementary levels (as an actor and as a character), the bi-polar gender signifying system. She looks like a man (as the actor's perceived sexed body), is "really" a young female (as the described role) but through her acts is actually not quite either under the bi-polar gender signifying system (as a character who plays with a gun and plays with/like the boys—historically masculine—but wears a dress—culturally feminine).

The character development and realization of Edward presents an even clearer instance of the simultaneous facilitation and invalidation of cross-casting. In the first act of the play Edward, perceived as a young boy, is played by a perceived adult "female" actor. "He" is however effeminate and "his" femininity re-conflates in the perception of the viewing audience, the perceived/presumed sexed body of the actor to the gender identity "she" is performing. In the second act, there is no apparent cross-casting as a perceived male character is played by a perceived male actor. Edward's behaviour nevertheless continues to conform with femininity, thereby depicting the sexed body and gender identity as separable, and gender as a transformable performative.

Beyond uncoupling the sexual identity from gender performance, the character of Edward questions and seems to disentangle sexual identity from the perceivable sexed body and to problematize the concept of an immutable bi-polar sexual identification—"man" and "woman"—that derives inalienably from physiology. Edward contest the facticity of sexual identity. Despite possessing the biological properties that are presumed to define a "man," Edward, throughout the play, remains ill at ease with "his" presumed sexual identity and with the gendered self—the gendered masculine self—"he" is punitively required to embody and perform. At the beginning of the play "he" is depicted as a boy who despite violent abuse and

with no apparent incentive, on the contrary, in the face of real disempowerment, embodies femininity. "He" plays repeatedly with Vicky's doll, appropriating the performative acts that constitute "woman." In adulthood, Edward, in a gay relationship with Gerry, situates "himself" as an abused wife, much like "his" mother, and "his" grandmother before "him," not in self-conscious role-play, but in confused existence. "He" continues to embody and enact femininity—always waiting for Gerry, cooking his meals, knitting and nagging him much like Betty behaved with Clive in the first act. Towards the tail-end of the play, following the dissolution of "his" relationship with Gerry, Edward, amid incestuous encounters with "his" sister, Vicky, reconsiders "his" sexual identity and concludes that "he" would rather be a woman, or perhaps that "he" is a woman or perhaps "he" "really" is in-the-incessant-process-of-becoming-a-woman (performing the repetitive acts that dominant ideology normalizes as female). Not only that, "he" declares "himself" lesbian. Through "his" character, Churchill uncouples sexual identity from the sexed body and renders unstable and problematic the bi-polar sexual identities that derive inalienably from physiology.

Because of this destabilization of sexual identity, I contend, though "he" is played by an actor perceived as a "woman" at some moments of the play and by one perceived as a "man" at others, and though this inevitably represents some form of cross-casting, Edward is more usefully analysed by looking at "his" character development and realization. To the extent that "his" sexual identity—and perhaps the implication here is that all sexual identity—is perpetually unstable, "his" casting cannot neatly cross or be contained within the boundaries of biological sex much like Joshua cannot neatly be cast across or within definitive racial boundaries. Edward dramatizes how sexual and gender identities, singly and/or conflated, in lived experience, are at once fundamental to one's nature and therefore seemingly immutable, and internally discontinuous, tenuous and arbitrary constructs capable of being broken and subverted—a lived paradox. Without resolving this paradox, the concluding portion of this chapter investigates the issues of sexuality presented in *Cloud Nine.* My inquiry will draw from and expand Michel Foucault's efforts to chart the history of sexuality and trace the power mechanisms of sexuality.

At the conclusion of *The History of Sexuality* Foucault meditates:

> Perhaps one day people will wonder at this. They will not be able to understand how a civilization [contemporary Western culture] so intent on developing enormous instruments of production and destruction found time and the infinite patience to inquire so anxiously about the actual state of sex; people will smile when they recall that here were men [sic]—meaning ourselves—who believed that therein resided a truth every bit as precious as the one they had already demanded from the earth, the stars, and the pure forms of their thought; people will be surprised at the eagerness with which we went about pretending to rouse from its slumber a sexuality which everything—our discourses, our institutions, our regulations, our knowledges—was busy producing in the light of day and broadcasting to noisy accompaniment. And people will ask themselves why we were so bent on ending the rule of silence regarding what was the noisiest of our preoccupations. In retrospect, this noise may appear to have been out of place, but how much stranger will seem our persistence in interpreting it as but the refusal to speak and the order to remain silent. People will wonder what could have made us so presumptuous; they will look for the reasons that might explain why we prided ourselves on being the first to grant sex the importance we say is its due and how we came to congratulate ourselves for finally—in the twentieth century—having broken free a long period of harsh repression, a protracted Christian asceticism, greedily and fastidiously adapted to the imperative of bourgeois economy. And what we now perceive as the chronicle of a censorship and the difficult struggle to remove it will be seen rather as the centuries-long rise of a complex deployment for compelling sex to speak, for fastening our attention and concern upon sex, for getting us to believe in the sovereignty of its law when in fact we were moved by the power mechanisms of sexuality.[27]

As I have stated previously *Cloud Nine* was based on a workshop on sexual politics that

drew its participants from white actors in London. This workshop was conducted on the eve of the Thatcher years in Britain. The workshop was also conducted prior to the outbreak of the AIDS epidemic, a fact that had profound effects on the kinds of sexual expression represented in the play. The aim of this workshop was to allow it participants, on the shared basis of their personal experiences and biographies, to identify and disclose the constraints and prejudices that continued to prevent the enjoyment of complete sexual freedom in the "liberated" contemporary society. Participants to the workshop were selected basis of both acting and sexual experience. A deliberate attempt was made to ensure that the company comprised of actors of diverse sexualities and varied sexual experience. Tony Sher, a participant in the workshop, described its composition in the following somewhat rambling manner:

> Thus the collection assembled for the workshop (not all of whom were eventually to be involved in the play) included a straight married couple, a straight divorced couple, a gay male couple, a lesbian, a lesbian to be, at least two bisexual men, no bisexual women, and then, of course, the usual large number of heterosexuals, that is when they weren't dabbling in other categories. Finally, observing this cross-section, this Noah Ark of human sexuality, our playwright, Caryl Churchill, herself a committed and tolerant feminist.[28]

Churchill wrote *Cloud Nine* in the wake of a three-week workshop during which participants shared information about their sexual practices and the constraints and prejudices they continued to experience.

With a first act, metaphorically set in the Victorian age, that features various characters struggling to come to terms with their sexualities in age apparently overdetemined by violent sexual repression, and with a second act, set in contemporary London, that features largely the same set of characters still struggling to come to terms with their sexualities one hundred years later in an age of apparent liberation, *Cloud Nine* offers opportunities for intertextual readings with Foucault's *The History of Sexuality*. In *The History of Sexuality* Foucault rejects the "repressive hypothesis," and contends that sexual desire is constituted, expressed and policed

primarily not through the exercise of repressive power but through the proliferation of multiple and contradictory discourses on sexuality. Foucault specifically and categorically rejects the notion that the Victorian age (beginning late in the seventeenth century and culminating in the nineteenth century) was the period during which both sexual desire and sexual expression, after generations of relative freedom, were curtailed and repressed in the West by emerging dogmatic and puritanical religious, educational, medical and political authorities. He also rejects the notion that contemporary Western societies have late in the twentieth century at last re-asserted and re-affirmed the sexual freedom humanity had enjoyed prior to the seventeenth century and the onset of the repressive and puritanical Victorian age.[29] Beyond investigating the implications of the apparent reification of the "repressive hypothesis" in the Joint Stock company's workshop exploration of sexual politics in contemporary Britain, my attempt at an intertextual reading examines the ways in which *Cloud Nine* both resists and reproduces the structure of racialized and colonialist omission and displacement that characterize *The History of Sexuality*.

Foucault argues that the Victorian age—ostensibly the age of sexual repression—marked a radical shift in the character of power from the "deployment of alliance" to the "deployment of sexuality." He posits that sexual desire and sexual expression are implicated in the negotiations of power to such an extreme extent that "technologies of sex" have, since the seventeenth century, become instrumental in the production and exercise of power. The exercise of power is paradoxically maximized in those instances when sexual subjects perceive themselves to have attained complete sexual freedom. The deployment of sexuality consists, in Foucault's specification, of four strategic unities: a hysterization of women's bodies, a pedagogization of children's sex, a socialization of procreative behaviour, and a psychiatrization of perverse pleasure.[30]

Set in the nineteenth century in the Victorian age, the first act of *Cloud Nine* appears at first glance to be an age of repression. Indeed, my own analysis of the act earlier in this chapter emphasized the repressive character of the authority wielded by Clive. The act involves numerous instances of violence that institute and buttress Empire. The entire colony is founded

and sustained in the name of Queen and Empire under the stewardship of Clive, the queen's surrogate in colonial Africa—the deployment of alliance. Without diminishing the importance of this repressive power, it is also clear that there is more than just repressive power being summoned to cultivate and secure the ideal bourgeois subject. In Foucauldian terms, the "deployment of sexuality" is being superimposed on the "deployment of alliance." The ideal bourgeois household—Clive's white upper class settler family—is in the first act of the play not so much the model patriarchal heterosexist example as the site onto which multiple and contradictory discourses on sexuality are incited and all manner of "revolting perversion" implanted. Images of the masturbating or sexually active child (Edward's sexual relations with Harry, a white lower class colonial officer), the lesbian governess (aggressively pursuing Betty, the ideal bourgeois wife), the "pederast"(Harry, the lower class explorer) and the adulterer (Clive, the queen's own surrogate) proliferate throughout the outwardly repressive Victorian age. In a crucial sense, the sexual struggles that seem to consume all the characters in the second act of the play are produced by the discourses incited and implanted throughout the first act. The first act is not then exclusively the age of repression from which the characters, liberated in second act, struggle to emerge. It marks, *as well*, the deployment of sexuality and renders desire constitutive and instrumental to the exercise of power.

In *Race and the Education of Desire*, Ann Laura Stoler undertakes a colonial reading of Foucault's *The History of Sexuality*.[31] Stoler begins by positing the "obvious question": why, for Foucault, colonial bodies never figure as a possible site for the articulation of nineteenth century European sexuality?[32] The structure of racialized omission that this questions opens up is critical because, as Stoler argues, the period that Foucault focuses on in his analysis of sexuality and power coincides with the period of European imperial expansion. Stoler argues "that the discursive and practical field in which nineteenth century bourgeois sexuality emerged was situated on an imperial landscape where the cultural accoutrements were partially shaped through contrasts forged in the politics and language of race."[33]

I am suggesting that *Cloud Nine* both repeats and resists the omission of race and

colonialism that mars *The History of Sexuality*. The first act of the play is set in colonial Africa. To that extent it demonstrates how the cultivation of the ideal bourgeois subject cannot be read within a bracketed history of a self-contained "West" but made understood, in part, in terms of the language and politics of race in the colonial margin. Racialized discourses depicting the bestial sexual licence of the African enable Harry, significantly, the lower class colonial officer, to enjoy, it is suggested, homosexual encounters with African men during his explorations of the African interior (52- 3). Harry's accidental disclosure of his sexual escapades to Clive in turn permit Clive's denunciation of homosexuality as a revolting perversion and a threat to Empire, an insult to the Queen and a sign of degeneracy. The absent but sexually licentious Africans help secure Ideal bourgeois sexual conduct. In a demonstration of the interconnections between discourses of races and discourses of gender, Clive also seizes the opportunity to stress the importance of the heterosexual family and the necessity of reproduction. (51). Which is to say that the racialized pathologization of the degenerate pervert (Harry) enables Clive to socialize procreative behaviour. Harry and Ellen (the lesbian governess) are compelled to marry.

In the second act of *Cloud Nine*, Churchill appears to repeat the racial and colonial omissions that beset the exploration of sexuality in *The History of Sexuality*. The colonial setting of the first act is abandoned, its racial (as opposed to its gender and sexual) implications are all but effaced. The explorations of sexuality presume a bracketed, self-contained, all white West. The language and politics of race are elided. All the characters obsessively seek the truth about sex and through it, it would seem, the truth about life itself. The deployment of sexuality in the exercise of power is at its height. "The irony of this deployment" Foucault concludes, "is in having us believe that our 'liberation' is in the balance."[34] Betty seems to enjoy relative sexual freedom in the second act. She divorces Clive and moves haltingly towards sexual self-actualization and fulfillment. She begins by overcoming life-long inhibitions against self-gratification, a step that appears to hold out great promise. Later, she attempts to pick up a man who turns out to be gay, but suggested in the effort is the fact that she will be able to find a man with whom to fulfil her sexuality. This quest represents not freedom but capitulation to the

deployment of sexuality and the making of sex instrumental in the exercise of power. More revolutionary, perhaps, is the real prospect of a non-sexual friendship between Betty, a middle aged heterosexual woman, and Gerry, a young gay man.[35] The relationship is revolutionary precisely because it is non-sexual.

As was the case in the first act, the family in the second act materializes as the site for the proliferation of multiple and conflicting discourses on sexuality. Betty's daughter, Vicky, away from lifelessness and the lack of being that defined her as a doll in the first act, after an unsatisfying marriage to Martin (a man obsessed with her sexual pleasure), seeks to find her identity outside heterosexism and monogamy, and has paired with Lin, and eventually with Edward in a reconfiguration of human family, which, significantly, does not take authority or legitimacy—does not derive power—from a dominating patriarchal figure. This re-configuration will allow Cathy to blur through a different sort of repetitive acts, the prevailing gender codes without violent prohibition.

Clive's Empire seems to be crumbling. Conceding this, a despairing Clive remarks at the end of the play: "You are not that sort of woman, Betty. I can't believe that you are. And Africa is to be communist, I suppose. I used to be proud to be British. There was a high ideal. I came out of the verandah and looked at the stars."(111). Although Clive's personal empire has undoubtedly crumbled, his deep despair is supremely ironical in the context of the larger colonial Empire. The re-configured human family must confront and daily resist the lopsidedly more powerful patriarchal society hopelessly steeped in a genderised signifying system. Cathy, for example, is viciously assaulted and injured for no reason other than being seen as a "girl" who dares play with/like the "boys." Alternate sexual practices remain largely unrealized or are contained in the very process of their apparent realization. And Africa, suddenly (and rather illogically) re-introduced at the play's closing moment, though nominally independent, has not, after all, become "communist." It has succumbed to a subtle, more sinister new colonialism consented to by a political leadership consisting of latter-day Joshuas empowered by enduring colonial hegemony and by alien forms of government. A relentless process of economic strangulation persists.

Pyhrric victories have been won but the war waged against colonial occupation has been inconclusive. It could be argued that the varied and contradictory struggles in the play have reproduced the condition of ambivalence or indeterminacy that sustain the exercise of colonial power. It is clearly not enough that black-skinned men or white women now exercise visible power; oppression continues altered but largely unabated. Dark-skinned women remain the least visible subject of oppression. Whether within the dramatic universe of this play or within its critical reception, the omens are decidedly not good for those confronting an ever more subtle adversary and an ever more complex diffusion of power.

NOTES:

[1]See, for example, John Clum, "'The Work of Culture': *Cloud Nine* and Sex/Gender Theory," *Caryl Churchill: A Casebook*, ed. Phyllis Randall (New York: Garland, 1988), 91-116; Austin Quigley, "Stereotype and Prototype: Character In the Plays of Caryl Churchill," *Feminine Focus: The New Women Playwrights*, ed. Enoch Brater (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 25-52; Janelle Reinelt, "Elaborating Brecht: Churchill's Domestic Drama," *Communications from the Brecht International Society*, Athens, 14:2 (1985), 49-56; and Anne Herrman, "Travesty and Transgression: Transvestitism in Shakespeare, Brecht and Churchill," *Performing Feminisms: Feminist Critical Theory and Theatre*, ed. Sue-Ellen Case (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1990), 294-316.

[2]Elin Diamond, "Closing No Gaps: Aphra Behn, Caryl Churchill and Empire," *Caryl Churchill: A Casebook*, 161-174.

[3]Elin Diamond, "(In)visible Bodies in Churchill's Theatre," *Theatre Journal* 40:2 (1988), 188-204; and "Refusing the Romanticism of Identity: Narrative Interventions in Churchill, Benmussa and Duras" *Performing Feminisms*, 92-102.

[4]Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1979), 16-31.

[5] Homi K. Bhabha, "The Other Question: Difference, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism," *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Culture*, ed. Russell Ferguson et al. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT press, 1990) 71- 88; 71.

[6]Bhabha, "The Other Question," 71.

[7] Caryl Churchill, *Cloud Nine*, Revised American Edition, (New York: Routledge, 1994.), 3. My emphasis. Subsequent page references in my text are from this edition.

[8]Elin Diamond "(In)visible Bodies," 194.

[9]Janelle Reinelt, "Elaborating Brecht," 49.

[10]Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Gender Feminist Criticism," *Performing Feminisms*, 270-282.

[11]Butler, "Performative Acts," 270- 271.

[12]Butler, "Performative Acts," 273.

[13] Elin Diamond, "Brechtian Theory/Feminist Theory: Towards A Gestic Feminist Theory," *Drama Review*, 32:1 (1988), 82-94.

[14] Diamond, "Brechtian Theory"82.

[15]Richard Schechner, "Race Free, Gender Free, Body-Type Free, Age Free Casting," *TDR* (Spring, 1988), 4 -12.

[16] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak" *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Gary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 271-2.

[17]Caryl Churchill, *Cloud Nine*, viii.

[18].Caryl Churchill, *Cloud Nine*, viii.

[19] It was not until its nineteenth production, Hanif Kureishi's *Borderline* in October 1981 (nearly nine years after its founding) that the Joint Stock Company involved non-white practitioners in any of its performances. This is in spite the fact that the Company had previously confronted issues of racial and cultural appropriation in several of its previous productions, for example David Hare's *Fanshen*, a play based on William Hinton's examination of the Chinese Revolution also entitled *Fanshen*. First performed to great critical and popular acclaim Sheffield in March, 1975, the production featured an all white British cast playing (mostly peasant) Chinese characters. For an examination of the racist tendencies within the Joint Stock Company and how the impulses were challenged through the institution of "multicultural policies" in the company's last five years of existence (1984-1989), see Joyce Delvin, "Joint Stock: From Colorless Company to Company of Color," *Theatre Topics* 2 (March 1992), 63-76.

[20]I adopt this phrase from the title of Frantz Fanon's examination of colonialism, *Black Skins White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markman (New York: Weidenfeld, 1967).

[21] Homi K. Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," *The Location of Culture*, (London and New York: Routledge 1994) 85- 92; 86.

[22] Bhabha, "Of Mimicry," 86.

[23] Bhabha, "The Other Question: Difference, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism," 71.

[24] Bhabha, "Of Mimicry," 86.

[25]See especially Elin Diamond, "Refusing the Romanticism of Identity"

[26] Homi K. Bhabha, "The Other Question: Stereotype, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism," in *The Location of Culture*, 66- 84; 66.

[27] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Volume I: An Introduction* trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books 1990), 157-158.

[28] Tony Sher qtd. in *The Joint Stock Book: The Making of a Theatre Collective*, ed. Rob Ritchie (London: Methuen, 1987) 139.

[29] See Foucault, "We 'Other Victorians'," *The History of Sexuality*, 1- 15.

[30] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 104-5.

[31] Anne Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham and London; Duke University Press, 1995).

[32] Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*, vii

[33] Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*, 5.

[34] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 159.

[35] The order of the events I am reading here is specific to the Revised American Edition of *Cloud Nine*. In the original production, Betty attempts to pick up Harry before she overcomes her inhibitions against self-gratification.

POSTSCRIPT:

WHEN "ADDING TO" DOES NOT "ADD UP"

> ....Interwoven into these patterns of immigration is the ambiguous status of the incoming graduate student who comes from elsewhere, who studies under the full weight of the existing canonicity, who rebels against it, who counterposes other kinds of texts against the so-called canonical text, especially if any are available from her or his part of the world. These other kinds of texts become, then, the document, even the counter-canon of his or her national self-assertion. This choice corresponds to the ambiguities of an existential kind, precipitated by the contradictions of the metropolitan, liberal, predominantly white university. It is by nature a site of privilege, and the student comes with the ambition of sharing this privilege. The liberal, pluralistic self-image can always be pressed to make room for diversity, multiculturalism, non-Europe; careers can arise out of such re-negotiations of the cultural compact. But this same liberal university is usually, for the non-white student, a place of desolation, even panic; exclusions are sometimes blatant, more often only polite and silent, and the documents of one's culture become little sickles to clear one's way through spirals of refined prejudice.[1]

I have undertaken in this study a post-colonial re-reading of two influential Western feminist plays. I have attempted to trace the relationship between colonial history and the cultivation of the ideal bourgeois subject, and contemporary metaphor and the cultivation of the ideal feminist subject. I have also attempted to trace the parallels

between colonial history and contemporary global capitalism. I posed the question whether, in two contemporary re-enactments of colonial history, Empire was metaphorically re-inscribing itself in the wake of feminist revision. It has not been my intention to formulate a definitive answer to this question in the course of or at the conclusion of my study. I have sought, instead, to explore the avenues of inquiry that the very posing of that question—belated and supplementary—opened up.

Coming nearly two decades after the writing of *Cloud Nine*, and nearly a decade after the writing of *Our Country's Good*, during which periods both plays (but especially *Cloud Nine*) have acquired considerable cultural capital in the West and considerable currency in Western feminist scholarship, my study has been marked by a sense of belatedness. I have sought to make this belatedness count in a supplementary intervention that proposed as its project not so much a straightforward dissent that contradicted and dismissed prior readings, but an "adding to" that sought to productively engage with and disturb specific modes of Western critical articulation. I have been particularly interested in the ways contemporary processes of knowledge production and circulation in the West within the context of global capitalism repeat and revise earlier processes of knowledge production and circulation in the West within the context of colonial expansion.

My project has not been an attempt to point to inappropriateness of Western feminist revisions of colonial history. My project has also not been an attempt to offer post-colonial theory *in place* of feminist theory as the appropriate alternative strategy in reading both *Cloud Nine* and *Our Country's Good*. I have not sought to reject out of hand the use by two Western feminist playwrights of colonial history as the site for contemporary metaphors. My study has attempted, using the example of the critical

reception of the two plays, to trace the points of convergence and divergence between feminist creative and critical practice in the West and post-colonial scholarship. I am disturbed at the conclusion of this study by the thought that had I continued my studies "elsewhere," had I not migrated to a Western nation and studied at a metropolitan university, I could, quite conceivably, never have encountered *Cloud Nine* and *Our Country's Good*. I have argued that the contemporary production and circulation of knowledge must be understood against the background global capitalism and the exercise of global power. Whereas this argument explains, in part, the circulation of two feminist revisions of colonial history within a bracketed discursive and material West, it is in the end insufficient as an explanation as to why I had not encountered these two texts in my literary studies "elsewhere." While I remained unaware of both *Cloud Nine* and *Our Country's Good*, I was, in the course of my undergraduate education, introduced to such contemporaries of Churchill's and Wertenbaker's as Tom Stoppard, Howard Barker and Harold Pinter. My critique of the two feminist projects I have been studying is tempered by the realization that my own education "elsewhere" uncritically reproduced male privilege in the definition and contestation of the Western canon; a realization that affirms the value and necessity of feminist interventions across the frontiers and discourses of colonialism.

My study has attempted to trace the implication of a particular forms of feminist practice in the reproduction of colonial history not with a view of passing dismissive normative judgements or assigning intentionality and blame. My project has been an attempt to understand how oppositional processes of cultural production may be implicated in the very structures of power that they seek to undermine and resist. I have

engaged two valorized feminist revisions of colonial history drawing substantially from their contestations of dominant gender and sexual ideologies while also stressing their implication in the metaphorical—and literal—exercise of colonial and racist power. I have attempted to understand the ways in which the very process of resistance in one "ideal" form may be constitutive of power in "other" forms. I have not attempted, in this study, to offer a general prescription for truly and comprehensively counter-hegemonic processes of cultural production. My belated 'adding to' to critical discourses and debates about *Cloud Nine* and *Our Country's Good* has, in a fundamental sense then, not 'added up.' Nor, I don't think, could it have.

But this study also turned on my own implication, as a consumer and critic of culture studying in the West, in the same racist and colonialist discourses and institutions I set out to disclose and disturb. It has turned on the ambivalent and contradictory relationship between a liberal metropolitan university and a non-Western graduate student; a relationship marked, as Ahmad discusses above, concurrently with privilege and exclusion, opportunity and refined prejudice, and promise and desolation. On this score, my interventionary 'adding to' has been, if anything, more uncertain. Two years after I first came to the West from "elsewhere," I will at the conclusion of this study, be migrating again, travelling *lightly*, from one Western nation to another, from one metropolitan university to another, and from one level of graduate studies to a higher one. My interests and investments in the institutions and discourses I have to attempted to undermine from within in this thesis will grow rather than diminish. It will, to return to the Homi K. Bhabha quotation that opened up this study, be, for me, a further experience of living "that moment of the scattering of the people that in other times and other places,

in the nations of others, becomes a time of gathering."[2] It will most of all be a time, I imagine, for the incompatible but concurrent gathering of "the signs of approval and acceptance, degrees, discourses, disciplines," on the one hand, and of "the memories of underdevelopment, of other worlds lived retroactively; gathering the past in a ritual of revival, gathering the present," on the other.[3] In a profound but also deeply ambivalent and contradictory sense this thesis has owed a lot to my continuing experience of migration and of living that moment where 'adding to' critical discourse could not possibly have afforded me the satisfaction and closure of 'adding up.'

NOTES:

[1] Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures*, (London and New York: Verso, 1994), 84.

[2] Homi K. Bhabha, "Dissemination: Time, Narrative, and the Discourse of the Modern Nation," Nation and Narration ed. Homi K. Bhabha, (New York: Routledge 1990), 291

[3] Bhabha, "Dissemination," 291.

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